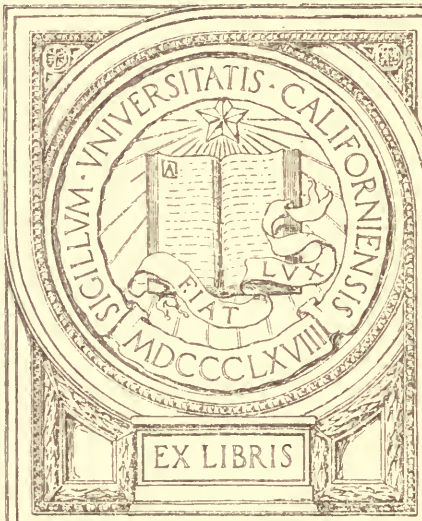
# FLOWER OF THE WORLD

ALICE CALHOUN HAINES

ornia
nal
y

GIFT OF

Class of 1887




926
H15

# FLOWER OF THE WORLD

# FLOWER OF THE WORLD

BY

ALICE CALHOUN HAINES

AUTHOR OF "FIRECRACKER JANE"

NEW YORK

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

681 FIFTH AVENUE

Copyright, 1922,
By E. P. Dutton & Company

*All Rights Reserved*

PRINTED IN THE UNITED
STATES OF AMERICA

PS
3515
H1266f

TO

JEDEDIAH TINGLE

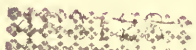
WHO

VISITS AND VANISHES

IN GRATITUDE

FOR

MAGICS FULFILLED



978160

# CONTENTS

## PART I


| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| I. | Of Something Lost in the Sea and Found Again | 3 |
| II. | Of a Bird that Flew Away—How an Artist Should Be Like a Crusader | 21 |
| III. | Of a Wind and Dancing Flowers—How Katheryn Would Not Stay to Supper | 34 |
| IV. | How Mamá Soledad Came Back for Lisa —and the Stars are Nothing But Balls of Fire | 44 |
| V. | Talking About Fairies | 59 |
| VI. | Men's Eyes and a Mirror no Bigger Than a Scallopshell | 74 |
| VII. | How Mamá Soledad Sent Word for Lisa to Come—But It Wasn't Possible | 88 |
| VIII. | To the Birth of a Star | 105 |
| IX. | In April Weather | 115 |
| X. | How Michael Finds the Sleeping Beauty and Wakens Her From a Bad Dream | 126 |
| XI. | "Out of the Whirlwind" | 139 |

## PART II


| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| XII. | The Island | 157 |
| XIII. | Of the Difference Between Tatcho Romano and Mongrel | 176 |
| XIV. | How Morella Told La Buenaventura | 194 |
| XV. | The Good Americans | 206 |
| XVI. | How it May Prove Convenient to Have an Aunt Who Collects Teapots | 219 |
| XVII. | How Michael Went to France for Love—and Lisa Learns How Strange a Thing Happiness Can Be | 237 |
| XVIII. | How Lisa Told Charles' Fortune—"La Vida Est Sueño" | 254 |
| XIX. | Flower of the World | 266 |

# FLOWER OF THE WORLD

*Flower o' the broom,*
*Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!*
—Fra Lippo Lippi.

*El alma es consonancia*
*De todo lo creado, y sus amores*
*Son la luz, la fragancia*
*De estrellas y de flores;*
*¿ Quién detiene perfumes y fulgores?*
—Juan Valera.

[The soul is harmony
With all created things, and the soul's loves
Are as the light, the fragrance
Of stars and of flowers;
Who can withhold their perfume, their effulgence?]

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

# *PART I*

# FLOWER OF THE WORLD

## CHAPTER I

### OF SOMETHING LOST IN THE SEA AND FOUND AGAIN

A MAN lay basking on the sunny rocks. He was a big handsome fellow, blond bearded, blue eyed. He sprawled there, half sleepy, half smiling, and watched a child dancing in the breaking surf-line along the narrow curve of beach below. The swift swirl of the waters, the shift and shimmer of revolving sands, far from inspiring any sense of apprehension, seemed to excite the little dancer to a wild and reckless ecstasy.

She could not have been more than seven or eight years old. Unconscious of audience, bare-headed, her tattered wisp of a skirt clinging about her little thin legs, she pranced in the spray. She had flung a wreath of kelp over her shoulders. Now and then she gave a shrill shriek. The reedy sound floated up to the man like the cry of a sea-bird.

The rocky ledge from which he watched jutted out above the rim of horseshoe beach so that his position was very similar to that of a spectator in a *loge* overlooking the stage of a theatre. A flight of rickety steps led down to the sands; but it was hidden from the child by a jut in the cliff.

The day was very bright, cloudless, but windy. A mounting tide surged and lashed among the great boulders that girdled the shore. On a flat-topped rock, already half submerged, a flock of gulls had gathered. Occasionally one would rise, circle slowly above its mates and settle again.

The small dancing shadow of the child, swaying over the wet sands, fascinated the man. Her solitary play, at first an enigma to him, was instinct with grace and purpose. Suddenly she caught up the dripping ends of kelp that hung from either shoulder. Arms extended, with a free wide-flung movement, she waved them wing-like about her. At last he understood. . . . Her slim little person seeming actually to float through the spray, she mocked and mimicked the gulls. . . .

The man jerked to a sitting posture,—reached out for the sketching-block beside him. In the sudden drawing up of his knees his foot struck a loosened stone. It shot to the cliff edge, balanced there a moment,—then ricocheted to the sands below. . . .

The child, startled, looked up;—took a scared leap back, missed her footing and fell. For a moment she struggled, clutching among the slippery rocks. A wave broke over her,—dragged at her,—she was gone. . . .

Light tennis shoes, flannel shirt and trousers,—the man gave thankful thought to his artist negligée as he dashed down the wooden stairs. . . . A treacherous coast at the best,—and a bad turn of the tide. . . .

Not a sign . . . not a sound. . . . Having snatched and devoured, a lull seemed to have fallen on the sea. Gone? Was it possible,—that dancing, spritelike thing?

The gulls rising in a gray bevy beat out over the sparkling pitiless waste. . . . Pitiless. . . . What chance?—drifting as weed drifts. . . .

There,—flung up on a froth of churning breakers. . . . Just beyond the gulls' rock. . . .

The man was swimming now,—swimming magnificently,—cleaving his way with powerful overhead strokes. . . .

The waves mounted, lashed themselves into new fury, —battling and struggling for their tidbit.

A thin little arm. . . . A swirl of meagre garments. . . . He snatched,—dived and snatched again. . . .

With one hand holding the thing he had rescued (it struggled faintly like a half-drowned kitten) he fought his way back to the beach. Here he took it by the heels and shook the water out of it. . . . Not entirely scientific, perhaps,—but effective. The kitten, having choked and strangled, wanted to mew.

"There! there! no harm in a little salt-water. . . ." The handsome fellow breathed hard, tossing a shower of sparkling drops from his blond beard. He stooped and picked up the sweater he had shed in his race down the steps to the sands:—"How's this to warm us up?"

It was then the kitten opened its eyes; and the man saw they were the color of the sea; neither green, nor gray, nor brown,—but the hidden color of the under side of a wave. . . .

"To-morrow will you dance for me?" he asked.

A wan little smile flickered; she relaxed and cuddled down in the curve of his arm.

He drew the sweater more closely about her and began to mount the steps to the cliff. . . .

The artist colony at San Miguel took content in its remoteness,—a content not unmingled with pride. It made open boast of the one shabby, old, shambling-verandahed frame hotel, where few tourists ever lingered; of the fact that the post-office was a branch of the village grocery store, and that if you were new enough to think you were going to have a gas-range installed in your bungalow you promptly discovered you must compromise on oil. Nobody was wanted at San Miguel who came for anything other than the shaggy shadows of giant eucalyptus along the gray road running up from the sea; the brown rolling dunes beyond; or the smashing surge of surf along the rocky shore. There was not much else to come for. Anywhere between four and six in the afternoon the postman's striped umbrella and sturdy white pony might be descried topping the hills from Val Verde. He brought yesterday's Los Angeles papers. Railway and trolley service ending at Corona, the beach station beyond Val Verde, summer vacationists were little to be feared.

Socially and geographically the settlement at San Miguel divided itself into three strata. There were the Portuguese fisher-folk living in their driftwood shacks along the kelp-strewn sands of Smugglers' Cove. There was the "old village" with its sleepy cross-roads, pungently redolent of eucalyptus, cedar, and damp salty spume. They still "kept Sunday" in the old village, and had their own opinion of the "painter set" on the cliffs

above;—Steven Spanach's neckties and Mrs. Andrews' cigarettes. . . .

Steven was a Serbian. To him, red was a beautiful color, equally suitable for a sunset, a flag, or a cravat. . . . Nobody had ever succeeded in affixing any definite habitat to Mr. Andrews; but Mrs. Andrews came from Alabama. She had large dark eyes which she opened on you intently as she talked. . . .

"Even You must admit," she challenged Joseph Brentwood, "that we Artists are privileged to make our own Precedents. Was not Vision given us that we might look Forward,—rather than back!"

Brentwood smiled at the "even You. . . ." He understood well enough they thought him an old fogey. That they half despised his systematic habits of regular industry, his assured yet entirely unspectacular safety of standing. What they said was, he didn't do anything but repeat. You had only to compare his "Golden Slopes at San Miguel," commissioned for the new state library and still in process of execution, with the "Long Road to the Sea," which had first brought him notice some fifteen years before. . . . Well,—he admitted he had struck his stride. But somehow he couldn't bring himself to believe sunshine a thing to go out of date. In the village they liked his pictures,—understood them. When he painted a sheep it looked like a sheep,—and no guessing! . . . It was always his place they pointed out:—"That long gray bungalow, the first on your way up, belongs to Brentwood,—Joseph Brentwood,—the Father of the Colony. . . ." He found it pleasant they should call him that; even at

such times as he envied the younger men, their ardors, their rebellions, almost their defeats.

Half a mile beyond Brentwood's, high among the dunes, was Robert Martyn's studio. It was there they gathered to drink tea. Certainly, there was nothing old-fashioned about Martyn. His dashing, almost too stylistically pungent, illustration work was known from one end of the country to the other. . . . "The reason," Judith, his wife, supposed, "for our moving to the Pacific Coast! Katheryn, who rhymes hobgoblins, aspires after classic verse. Robert pines to do the usual in the way of marines. . . ."

"Jove, but she digs!" Little Fred Smalley (whose own marines were quite "the usual") broke into his accustomed cackle. "If a chap will marry a woman with eyebrows like that. . . ."

Kate Griffeth, to whom the aside was addressed, ignored it;—glancing across at Robert. He rarely talked when he worked. The mail brought more orders for illustrations than he could well fill. Tall, aquiline, reserved, sensitive, he gave nothing of Brentwood's impression of comfortable accomplishment. . . . To-night he was obviously tired. The quick contraction of the brows might merely indicate a straining to make the most of the fading light.

"How much will you get for it?" asked Steven Spanach, suddenly.

There was a general laugh. Steven was nothing if not direct.

"No escaping the current touchstone," Brentwood

assured them, more than half serious. "Deplore it as one may, common-sense can't evade the conclusion that the market price does reflect a certain standardization of values. . . ."

Mrs. Andrews bent forward. "Are we, who Seek . . .?" The bit of buttered roll she had lifted to her lips slipped from her fingers. . . . Wide-eyed she fished for it down the square-cut neck of her loosely fitting smock. . . .

"Who Seek?" prompted Judith maliciously. Evidently it was one of her "off" afternoons. Smalley was right as to the danger signal. When her brows drew together like that there was something positively predatory in the flash of her glance, her pitiless taloned wit. . . . She was a woman, one would have said, who had everything; and who consumed herself eternally because it was not all somehow different. . . .

Kate, putting down her empty teacup, walked to the door,—flung it wide. . . . Tiny with distance, low in the twilight-burnished sea, three homing fishing boats were framed there as in a picture:—

"They've had a good catch! One is always glad. . . . But I believe I'm tempted to agree with Mr. Cortwright,—the sea simply isn't paintable. . . . Clouds, rocks, the shoreline, perhaps. . . ."

Her dark irregular features vibrant with response, the girl turned back to the room.

"Cortwright will hardly get here this afternoon." Brentwood had also risen, taken up his hat. "Off somewhere on the cliffs. . . . Half-cousin to a goat,—

that fellow!" There was never any sting to Brentwood's jests, their content being as kindly tolerant as the man's own nature. "You're going?"

"Not just yet. . . ."

A shade of disappointment crossed his face; though his walk it appeared was not to be unaccompanied. Mrs. Andrews, relinquishing her explorations, declared: Really, she must go. She wanted to Talk to Mr. Brentwood about that new Varnish. . . .

The ripple of the lady's departure subsiding, Judith, bending to her alcohol flame, wondered whether Mr. Andrews was, after all, "decently interred,—or merely nebulous?" Then she asked Steven Spanach if she couldn't fill his cup.

Steven declined. He admired Brentwood. "Good old papa," he said. "Good heart, good bank-account. . . . Solid,—like bread and butter. . . ."

Smalley, seeing Spanach ready to go, disposed of his tea in gulps. "Varnish? . . . Get that?" A convulsion of the Adam's apple indicated inhibited cachinnation, stoppered at the fount. . . . "*Varnish*,—well, why not?" The two young men shared a room at the hotel. When Steven sold a picture (he had ability and was beginning to make his way) apparently they shared that, too. What other bond of congeniality existed between them would have been difficult to discover. . . .

Perhaps, Judith suggested, Mr. Smalley selected Steven's cravats? . . . "Another cup, Katheryn? Evidently Philip Cortwright isn't coming. . . ." Even among her tea-things there was nothing restful about

Judith. "It's no concern of mine, of course;—but, if one can't have cake . . . an appetite for 'bread-and-butter!' . . ."

"*Merci du cadeau!* I'm not even conscious of an appetite for more tea. . . ." It never ruffled Katheryn when Judith stuck pins. To her the pity seemed that a woman who had so much should still be unhappy enough to care to make enemies. "Michael is the only escort I want. May he walk with me,—to the foot of the bluff?"

"Mother,—say yes!"

At the sound of his name a boy, perhaps ten years old, sprang to his feet in the flickering fireglow. So quiet had he lain there on the hearth-rug most of them had forgotten him. . . .

"It is a good deal like a menagerie," he entertained himself, his fancy catching whimsically at Brentwood's "half-cousin to a goat. . . ." "All but Father and Mother and Kate, of course. . . . Yes,—Mother is a hawk. Can I help that? And my father the man, she thinks, who tried to put her into a cage. . . . Mr. Smalley is like the organ-grinder's monkey. Sad and angry inside, but ready to do tricks for anybody's pennies. . . . When I wink,—that's nicer. . . . The sparks turn to golden butterflies. . . ."

Standing now, with flushed cheeks:—"Say *yes*, Mother!" he cried. . . .

"Why should I?" It hurt Katheryn to see Michael flinch. "Did you come this morning when I called you to practise?"

"You may go, Michael." For the first time Robert spoke,—stepping back from his easel. His voice sounded flat, without timbre. . . .

"To-morrow. . . . I'll practise till my arms drop off!" As instantly vivified by the permission as he had been dashed by its refusal, the boy bounded jubilantly to Katheryn's side. He was a singularly attractive child, graceful and delicately built. In this he took after Judith; though in no other way did his bright, fair, almost flowerlike beauty resemble her smoldering flame that scorched where it should have comforted. Sensitive, highstrung like his father, it was hoped Michael had something of his father's gift. . . .

"I should think," said the girl, as they swung along together through the salt-scented gloom of undulating dunes that seemed to rise wave after wave ahead of them to the low-drooping, faintly starred sky, "I should think you would love your violin."

"Oh, Katheryn, I do. . . . Sometimes. . . . It's this everlasting practise, practise, practise, I can't bear. What's the use? . . . when if they kept me at it for a thousand years I could never play the music that I *hear?*"

"You, too? Poor little Michael. . . .

> *"'Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,*
> *Or what's a heaven for?'"*

Michael's only answer was a joyous noncomprehending laugh, accompanied by a comradely hug of his

companion's arm. It was always a treat to him to be allowed to go home with Katheryn. . . .

She and her brother Owen lived in a little ramshackle frame cottage, hidden like a ragged gull's nest amid a clump of cedars half way up the cliff north of Abalone Point. Stormy weather when the winds tore and howled about the house, people wondered it was not snatched up bodily and tossed into the sea.

Sometimes, when Michael had permission to stay to supper (but that was not to-night) they would enter the low raftered living-room to find a black iron pot simmering among the hot ashes on the hearth. . . . The first thing you noticed was the warm good smell of the stew. The next would be Owen's eyes that seemed to burn at you out of the shadows where the couch was in the corner. . . .

"You're all right?" Katheryn would ask a little breathlessly. She never seemed able to get it out quick enough. And when Owen said he was, Kate would stir the red embers and get down the long-handled toasting-fork. It was Michael who made the toast. He did it beautifully. . . . But one night a piece broke and fell into the fire. . . . "It's spoiled," the boy cried. "Oh, it's spoiled!" Kate laughed and brushed the ashes off. . . . But Michael could not eat any supper.

As a rule there were no accidents; and when everything was ready, the three of them, cross-legged on the floor about the fire,—built to a blaze again,—plates in their laps, would make a regular picnic of it. And perhaps Katheryn would tell fairy stories; or Owen, his stooping shoulders and pain-wan face wavering

strangely in the reflected firelight would break into chanting snatches of poetry:—

*"I dreamed in a dream I saw a city invincible to the whole of the rest of the earth;*
*I dreamed that was the new City of Friends. . . ."*

Michael, looking into the fire, his knees hugged to his chin, would see the city there. . . . A shining golden wall standing out from a dark background of hills. . . . But if Owen had been working he did not try to talk. He coughed and put his hand to his side. Then Katheryn would watch anxiously and have no story to tell. . . .

It was not till years afterwards that Michael realized the gallant tragic struggle back of these firelit feasts; and by that time both Katheryn and Owen Griffeth had passed out of his life.

There may have been others who realized something of it. . . .

Brentwood, interested from the first in the unfortunate boy's talent, had one day told Katheryn her brother might go far if only he could be persuaded to break that "broncho imagination of his to harness. . . . Steady, steady does it. . . . Goethe had the idea, —*ohne Hast, ohne Rast*. . . ."

"Oh, but stars,—don't get tired!" Katheryn did her best to keep the desperation out of her voice. "And he oughtn't to work. . . . Not at all, really. Spine as well as lungs. . . . What he says is,—as long as there is life there shall be strength of will to do the things. . . ."

Brentwood looked away. Disconcertingly to both, Kate was having to hunt her handkerchief.

"How old is he?"

"Twenty-three. . . ." There were only the two of them. Since she was sixteen Kate had played the triple rôle of sister, mother, chum. . . .

"And,—you understand it is not curiosity. . . . I have had experience of what that sort of thing can mean. . . ." In the days of his early struggle Brentwood had lost a young wife. . . . "Is there anything beside these. . . ." The gray-headed painter waved his hand toward the brilliant, partially finished sketches,—bizarre, lurid splotches against the dingy walls,—"to keep the pot boiling?"

"My seashell articles,—and the Goblin Washing Powder ads." Kate tried for a laugh. . . . Only that morning the postman had brought back a long, familiar looking envelope. . . . The songs that *would* sing themselves, musical haunting echoes of far winds, once "rejected" became to her sensitive conscience a reproach. . . . To cover the laugh's deficiencies:—It was Owen's illustrations that put the Goblins over, she said. The more fantastic they were, the better they seemed to take.

"May I see some of them?" Brentwood spent half an hour looking through the portfolio Kate brought.

"Too bad, too bad," was his only comment as he got up to go. At random he took a book from the table. "You read Spanish? Translating might help out. . . ."

From that time he called oftener than ever at the shabby little shack among the cedars; and discovering

the afternoons Kate was to be found at the Martyns' made those his afternoons there, too.

The depth of reserve of her own nature was perhaps what caused so many different sorts of people to find Katheryn sympathetic. . . . When Steven Spanach came it was generally swinging a string of sand-dabs, a fresh caught mackerel, or glistening baracuda. . . . "They don't smell so nice as roses, you think?" he would pretend to tease, his black eyes snapping. "Wait till you fry them,—in butter!" Owen liked Steven, though his gusty entrances and exits,—on the order of those of "the West Wind, Esq."—often left him flat and rather gasping. That was because the two *would* shout Revolution at each other.

But if Philip Cortwright dropped in, immediately Owen shut up. It would be Katheryn then who found herself laughing, parrying almost lightheartedly the young sculptor's gay banter. . . . Cortwright had only recently moved into his beautiful new studio on the crest of the cliff. He expressed himself delighted to have neighbors. . . . Discovering that Owen was not to try for the exhibit that spring, and half suspecting the cause, Philip good-naturedly offered to frame anything the boy might select to send up. But Owen curtly refused.

"Poor devil! Too green-eyed to see where his own interest lies," Fred Smalley elucidated the incident.

Smalley was an unconscionable little gossip. They all knew he talked about them; and put up with it. For the sake, Judith liked to declare, of what he might be going to say about the others. A small colony at

that time; tolerant and good-humored toward one another.

So, for this reason or that, Michael was the only one ever asked to supper. To-night he was not to stay.

"See, Michael!" exclaimed the girl, as they came to the footpath that would take them up and round the bluff:—"Mr. Cortwright must be having company. Probably that committee from San Diego come to look at the model of his new fountain. . . ."

A still evening had succeeded the glittering bluster of the afternoon, with a white mist drifting in from the sea. High on the crest of the cliff, shimmering through the fog, gleamed the sculptor's studio,—a light in every window.

Michael drew in his breath. The effect was fairylike:—"Katheryn! I'd rather be Mr. Cortwright than—anybody in the world!"

"Why?" she asked, interested.

"Oh,—he's so free! Whatever he wants to do he seems to do,—without even trying. . . . When he plays his flute, it's like wild birds singing in a wood. . . . And if he wants to model he goes out on the sunny rocks. Then when he comes back to the studio. . . . Have you ever seen him work? Father says he has 'an instinct for anatomy. . . .' He—stands with his head up and his eyes shut,—maybe . . . as if he were calling for what he wants. And then . . . *phew!* I—I can't explain very well. . . . But it's the way I feel about my violin. . . . That I could really play—if only I lived off all by myself on a high cliff,—with nobody to love me and drag me down. . . ."

"Michael!" the girl laughed. "For shame! Not another step shall you come with me. Run home to your father and mother this minute!"

Philip Cortwright, as it happened, was not entertaining any art committee. Standing in his neatly appointed kitchenette, he poured hot milk from a small aluminum saucepan into a blue Canton china bowl. Suddenly becoming conscious of a smell of scorching he set the bowl on the dresser, turned and adjusted another burner of the oil-stove over which was a brown-covered pipkin wherein some cereal was cooking. . . . Holy Moses! It wasn't the porridge. It was her clothes!

Philip dashed through the studio door.

Across the long, brilliantly lighted room, the sea side of which seemed all window, before the great brick fireplace, suspended on an improvised line between two handsomely carved chairs, hung the threatened wardrobe:—a drabbled wisp of petticoat, a brief and faded little cotton dress.

Philip took them up, shook out with his usual precision of gesture their forlorn meagreness; folded them neatly, and laid them on one of the chairs.

Then he returned to the kitchen. The cereal had taken advantage of his absence to burn after all. So he cut a slice of bread and broke that into the hot milk; then placed a spoon in the bowl and carried it through the studio to the bedroom beyond. . . .

In the middle of the big brass bed, alert, watchful, still, the little half-drowned dancer he had snatched that afternoon from the sea was waiting for him. As

he entered the room, her eyes leapt to his face and fastened there.

So far she had not spoken. Stunned, buffeted by the waves' rough usage, she had clung to him; had submitted to have her wet things removed; had set her teeth against the whisky he had tried to force down her; had gone suddenly so limp, so blue about the nostrils, that Philip, frightened, had laid her on the bed.

When he brought blankets she disappeared beneath them to huddle like some small trapped animal,—one tiny hand clutching a fold through which he guessed she was peeping. So he drew a chair to the bedside and waited. Finally, fancying her asleep he had gone into the kitchen.

Now, returning, he found her waiting for him,—a small fantastic figure, propped high against the pillows, —almost lost in the gorgeous folds of an old Oriental dressing-gown he had thrown across the bed.

"I thought," said Philip, stopping in the doorway, held back somehow by those sea-strange eyes, "I thought it was about time you would be wanting your supper. Seagulls must eat, if they are to dance, you know."

He approached and held out the bowl. Still studying him, very cautiously she took it.

"That milk's good," he told her. "I heated it for you."

She tasted it. Evidently she was hungry. Once she had begun to eat she enjoyed the warm bread and milk, but without greediness,—handling her spoon with a certain dainty gusto. . . .

"Nice, wasn't it?" said Philip, when he saw she had nearly finished. "Perhaps now you can go to sleep."

"*Si, señor,*" the little creature answered. "*Tengo mucho sueño.*" Then, hesitating, with a pretty half lisp:—"I like my supper. . . . I like my bed. . . . I like my new dress,—but the *mangas* are too long for me. . . ."

Philip threw back his head to laugh. "Delighted, I'm sure. Wouldn't disturb you for the world. Only as that is usually *my* bed, can you tell me where I had better sleep?"

She looked at him puzzling. Evidently, English was an effort to her. Then as the sense of his question dawned, a wave of the hand encompassed in the too long "manga" indicated the open studio door:—

"There is another bed in that room. You may sleep there."

"Thank you so much," retorted Philip. "I let you sleep in my bed. . . . To pay for it,—you shall dance for me!" And he retreated still laughing to make up the couch in the studio.

## CHAPTER II

### OF A BIRD THAT FLEW AWAY—HOW AN ARTIST SHOULD BE LIKE A CRUSADER

IT was under the shower next morning that a belated thought assailed Philip. . . . His little dancer had a name. Pf! pr! he splashed and reveled in the cold spray. . . . Certainly, he ought to have asked it! A child of that age was liable to parents,—half a pair, at the least. The value set on offspring appeared to be in no way regulated by the ability to provide for them. . . . Ragged and neglected as the waif's condition was, a widowed mother might at this moment be tearing her hair . . . two uncles, a big brother, setting out with shotguns. . . .

The chief thing was,—he must get that dance! Plenty of time for family reunions. . . .

Thinking the matter over as he dressed, the conclusion was obvious. The child was a stray from the Portuguese fishing village. This being the case, she must have wandered some five miles along the shore. From Smugglers' Cove round Abalone Point was a great way for such a mite; with stretches at certain stages of the tide not only difficult but actually perilous. . . . It would have taken her half a day at the least. When

with evening she did not return? People of that order always counted on the worst. They might raise the devil of a fuss. . . .

He paused in his whistling. . . . Then took it up again,—there being one infallible panacea. . . . He'd pay. He'd pay, of course;—but they needn't think they were going to gouge him!

The weak link in the argument appeared,—he had no recollection of having seen the little dancer before. All of them got models from the fishing village. She was not the usual type. It seemed a little odd then?

So much the better. She was his find! What possible claim had Smalley, for instance? Clumsy dabster! let him try,—he'd never catch her. . . . There was a grace,—a touch of wild and untamed poetry. . . .

Smiling, Cortwright gathered up the heap of forlorn little garments from the chair where he had placed them the evening before. In the doorway to the bedroom he paused. . . . Unconsciously he had been expecting to find her as that other time, propped high against the pillows waiting for him. But the bed was empty.

Suddenly Philip chuckled. The mirror opposite revealed a ridiculously quaint and feminine reflection. On a chair pulled up before the dressing-table stood his little dancer,—oblivious, laboriously absorbed in pinning about her miniature anatomy the loose heavily-flowered folds of the all too ample Oriental dressing-gown. . . .

"Good morning," accosted Philip. "I see you are an early riser."

She turned to gaze. "*Buenos días, señor.*"

Then with quick dramatic gestures indicating this part of her dress and that she began to chatter,—a liquid unchecked flow,—rapid, musical, emphatic; but practically incomprehensible to Philip, except that he gathered she wanted to explain her inability to accomplish a satisfactory fit.

"Too big," he agreed. "Altogether too big. Better take it off again and put on your own things."

"*No! no!*" His meaning gradually dawning, she clutched closer the flowery folds, frowning an imperious displeasure. "*No quiero!*" It was only a word here or there Philip could get; till with a little stamp she emphasized in English:—"Old! old and ugly! I will wear this. *Make* it for me!"

Less skilled than a painter would have been in the impromptu adaptation of costumes, Cortwright sought to compromise. Didn't she like oranges? They were going to have oranges for breakfast.

Yes, *naranjas* were good. She would eat one,—after her dress was made. . . .

Seeing no way out of the difficulty but abject capitulation or the exercise of a distasteful and rather ridiculous physical supremacy, the argument finally ended in Philip's producing scissors, needle, and thread. An awkward enough job he made of it; the little dancer frequently interrupting to scold him. . . .

"What is your name?" he asked as he snipped and basted.

"Lisa. . . ."

"Lisa what?"

Looking over her shoulder into the glass she frowned:

—"No, *señor*. . . . *No!* God's Mother! A man without eyes could make better. It goes so. . . ."

Philip adopted the correction. "Then what is your father's name?"

"*No tengo padre.*"

"Where do you live?"

She shook free her silken skirts; turned slowly round on the chair smiling at her reflection; craning her little brown neck where a string of dark coral beads, all that remained of yesterday's attire, completed the effect:—

"A—ah!" A long breath of satisfaction:—"*Es muy bonito!*"

"And now will you dance for me?"

"*Señor*, I will eat my orange now. . . ."

Philip Cortwright was accustomed to considering himself the best natured fellow in the world. He was also entirely accustomed to having his undisputed way; nor did he especially think to correlate the two phenomena.

The little dancer, having finished her orange, began an inspection of the studio. Flitting in her bright silks from object to object, half startled, half fascinated, she suggested to Philip a butterfly touring a strange garden. Where anything especially interested or attracted her, she would pause,—sometimes reaching out to touch it with a light little hand. Instantly, having touched, she would glance at him over her shoulder. He pretended not to notice:—slipped into his blouse and continued to busy himself with preparations for the morning's work. . . .

"*Preciosa! Muy preciosa!*" The child had stopped before the model of a fountain completed by Cortwright the week before.

The design represented the figure of a mermaid rising from a wave. The base of the statue being in relief, a mere fishlike indication, the rounded young bosom and gleaming arms freed themselves above, head and hands thrown back to shake out a cascade of dripping misty hair. Cortwright considered it the best thing he had done. Oddly flattered by the child's praise he crossed to her and began to explain how when the fountain was set up in its basin in the park and pipes attached real water would spout from the mermaid's hair. . . .

"And now, if you will take off your clothes," he said, "and dance for me as you danced yesterday, here on this platform, I will make an image of you even more beautiful than this,—and give you a silver dollar besides!"

As usual, she listened attentively, puzzling out his meaning. At last a flash of merriment broke across the changeful little face. She cast up both hands to laugh; —a rippling crescendo of delicious appreciation. . . . Take off the clothes to dance! It was evident the idea struck her as the funniest joke in the world.

"Come!" Philip was not accustomed to having people waste his time. Almost any moment, now, might bring an invasion of voluble, hysterically injured relatives:— "I mean just what I say. See—here is the dollar!"

He held it up before her between thumb and finger.

Again she laughed,—and made a graceful little play of leaping to snatch it from him.

"No you don't!" Cortwright proceeded to pocket the coin. "Not till you dance for me. . . ."

Devil take the girl! He was beginning to feel actually exasperated; conscious of a sense of vexation and frayed nerves. What did she think she was? Since yesterday he had done nothing but wait on her. . . . Little ragged fisher's waif, with all the self-importance and whimsy affectation of a prima donna!

"Come,—I've no more time to waste. . . . Dance for me,—and you shall have your dollar. . . ."

He put out his hand to her dress. . . .

Instantly she had sprung beyond his reach. Her vibrant little person seemed to tingle, actually to sparkle with her wrath. With spread wings,—that was the impression he received,—and flashing wide-open eyes like an angry wasp she buzzed at him:—

Take off the clothes to dance! . . . Her vivid gestures translated for her. He must think her crazy! To dance one wore one's best,—necklaces, breastpins, earrings. . . . Successively she touched throat, breast, the little pink lobes of her ears. . . . *Ah ha!* She saw what he wanted! It was to steal away her beautiful new silk dress!

"*Damn!*" blurted Philip; and flung out of the room to the kitchenette where he began to clatter among the breakfast things.

Once a week a woman came from the village to clean. The rest of his work Cortwright did for himself, naïvely boastful of the accomplishment. He was one of those men unconsciously contemptuous of any feminine claim to practical consideration. A woman's beauty might

charm him, her wit entertain him. Superficially susceptible, even here there was a sort of sixth sense,—cynical, distrustful, on guard. . . .

This morning, having put up cups and saucers, scalded out the sink, hung mop and dishtowel in the sun, he felt his habitual good temper restored. Children as models did usually play the devil. It was his rule to fight shy of them. *But he must get that dance!* . . .

Not a sound from the studio. Had she curled up and gone to sleep like a stray kitten? Cortwright slipped noiselessly to the door.

The child was standing in the window.

Visitors to the studio were apt to drift to this wide sea-window where there was no other limit to the view than that of vision itself. Wind-driven clouds,—a flash of gulls' wings,—ever the changeful wonder of the sea. . . . Many were the compliments received by Philip on the panorama there displayed. It was part of his temperament he should accept them as something personal. . . .

Hardly anything so abstract would hold the little dancer. Absorbed, almost furtively intent, she did not even turn as he came to stand behind her. . . .

Sure enough,—along the strip of rocky beach where yesterday the child had danced,—a troop of Mexican gypsies was taking its southward way. Red, green and yellow, in all the colors of the rainbow, the women followed their undersized swarthy faced men. A straggle of brown bare-legged children, scattering like sandpipers before the waves. . . . A pretty girl with long earrings and many necklaces, who drove a tiny ass on which was

packed a dozen or so small wicker cages,—the native *periquitos* and canaries peddled by the gypsy women where they stopped to tell fortunes at the various seaside resorts. . . . Other burros laden with cooking utensils and camp paraphernalia, the usual assortment of mongrels, completed the train. Looked down on from the high studio window, animated, gesticulating, it was like the passing of a band of gnomes. . . .

"Gone!" The expression of the child's face as she lifted it to Cortwright was curious,—half gratified, half doubtful.

"Gone," he agreed:—"like floating weed. See, Lisa, the gulls are coming back to the rocks. Will not the little bird that danced so charmingly yesterday, dance for me again?"

"*Señor, no es posible.* . . ." An enigmatic little smile flickered the corners of lips and eyelids. "That bird has flown away. . . ."

The Martyns' had been a love match. It was Judith's own tongue that had made havoc of her dreams. . . . Even at the first Robert had had his doubts:—

"I'm afraid you don't quite realize what you are letting yourself in for," he tried to explain. "Just now I seem on the crest of the wave. That's only a lucky fluke, due to this poster craze. As a matter of fact, my present vogue is nothing but an interruption. . . . I've always intended to do big things. I have the vision, —the power, I believe. But it will take years and years of the hardest sort of work. . . ."

"You don't love me!" the girl had flashed back. "If you loved me, you wouldn't say such things. . . ."

It was because he did love her the thrust silenced him. He loved her so much he knew there was just one other thing he loved more. . . . Even in those days Judith's tongue was a sword. The sheen of her hair was like a raven's wing. In her glance burned the fire of winter stars. Radiant creature that she was, she might have had any one of half a dozen other men. It was Robert that she wanted,—and Robert she took.

She had no fortune. She had been brought up to believe she would marry money. Her aunt's opposition to the match merely hastened it:

"All right. You'll find out. I wash my hands of the consequences. . . ."

Judith, who had been selected for adoption from among seven attractive, if impecunious, nieces because of her "possibilities," did find out. And Robert found out, too. Once a man had a family there was no let up,—no possible turning back. His very facility, it appeared, was to be his undoing. His posters blazed the way for his illustration work. Slave as he would, he never got anything put by; never found himself in a position to refuse orders.

Judith was not a woman who knew how to retrench. "We have to live, don't we?" was one of her favorite phrases. "And there's Michael's future,—his musical education. You are always talking of Germany. . . . Is it your intention we should swim there? Perhaps *that* was your idea in a seaside studio? A Long Island resort would have seemed less—roundabout!"

He did not answer. . . . That was the worst. . . . He *never* answered. The onus of their intolerable quarrel was always left to her. . . . And, somehow, she couldn't drop it. Judith harbored no illusions,—even about herself. Lying awake, night after night, in the bitter darkness, she acknowledged she was jealous,—passionately jealous of Robert's silence,—for his silence was his Dream. She was even jealous of Michael's gift. . . . From the first Michael had meant so much to Robert!

"He's not a bit like you," the young father had said one day, looking down into the boy's fair sleeping face. The remark was entirely casual. But Judith took it to mean she was no longer first. And she wished she had died before her baby was born!

So, if it was not one thing, it was another. Robert had come to accept it; had quite given up trying to find out in what his shortcomings lay. Day after day he stood at his easel, silent, frowning a little, perhaps, when Judith nagged. . . . Try as he would he could not school himself to entire indifference. . . . Her recurrent stabbing gibes were like a red hot needle stabbing at his brain. The work he was doing was nauseous to him; relegated to a corner, face to the wall, was the canvas he had begun months before. . . .

Only yesterday Kate Griffeth, standing before it, had said:—"It's tremendously suggestive . . . that light —and the follow-up dance of the ripples. . . . I see what you're trying for. . . ."

He had counted on a winter of uninterrupted work!

Now, of course, Judith had to turn it about. . . .

"Heavens, Robert! If you'd only stop daubing out! Didn't you once tell me Penelope was a name that ran in your mother's family? If it isn't finished now, it never will be. There is a practical point of view;—and I can't see your bronchitis is a bit better here than it was in New York, or that it means anything to Michael but the loss of advantages. . . ."

The shimmer of his Dream flickered and died. . . . After the day's long, distasteful drudgery there was no resistance left. . . .

"Whist night, isn't it?" he parried mechanically. "They'll be coming,—before I have time to dress. . . . Put that thing back, Judith. You may be right. What I want now is a little breathing spell. And here comes Smalley. He'll help you with the tables. . . . No,—he didn't see me. I'll slip out the back way. Michael must be through practising by this time. A walk will do us both good."

Michael, banished to the tent-house where his practising would not disturb his mother, hailed his father as a deliverer. . . .

"How long on the scales?"

"Two hours, Father. . . ."

"How long on the bowing exercises?"

"Two hours. . . ."

"But you've been crying. . . ."

"I only cried half-an-hour, Father. . . . Then I worked. . . ."

Judith, who could not cry, sometimes envied Michael his tempestuous gusts of rebellious weeping, that left him, shaken, wan-eyed, washed out. . . .

Katheryn Griffeth, always his champion, had one day remonstrated:—

"You work him too hard. He isn't the sort to be driven. If you were my father I'd hate you, Robert Martyn."

"You'd be making a mistake," Martyn answered whimsically. "A mistake Michael doesn't make. If he is ever to amount to anything he must conquer his nerves. People talk of the artistic temperament. It's nothing but a form of indulged hysteria. . . . I know what I'm about. And Michael knows,—if you don't."

Kate, who felt she understood Michael better than Judith or Robert either, said no more. Her partisanship would only have resulted in an added strictness. It was no worse than many of the other mistakes parents made, she thought.

Robert was at least right in believing that Michael did not misunderstand him. As a matter of fact, with all the inarticulate suffering of sensitive childhood the boy apprehended far more of the hidden drama of his father and mother's life than they did of his;—felt it, reacted to it, without the relief of either expression or mature understanding. Tormented by a hundred impossible exaggerations, torn by conflicting sympathies, from day to day, from week to week, he participated in the unequal struggle. And it was probably more to this drain than to anything else that his restless nights, his over-emotionalized responsiveness were due. Even Katheryn, who prided herself on having won his confidence, entertained no suspicion of the true state of things.

This afternoon one look into his father's face was enough. The weariness, the disillusion, Michael read there made him instantly forgetful of any grievance of his own.

Having silently put up his violin he slipped a cold little hand into Robert's:—

"Let's walk up to Mr. Cortwright's, Father. It—it's so *high* there! And Katheryn says he's finished his fountain."

Martyn's fingers closed over those of his son. A walk with Michael always rested him. There was something wonderfully *simpático* about the little chap. He was game and generous, too. . . . Bitter with thoughts of his own defeat, Robert was all the more resolved Michael should conquer where he had failed;—that discipline should make him master of himself and of his art. . . .

"You remember that time I took you to hear Jastrow, Michael?" They had reached the crest of the cliff and stopped to watch the sun, a fiery disk plunging through smoky clouds to the cool clear ripples of the sea. . . . "You would like to play like that? It all depends on what a man puts first in his life. . . . You were reading about the Crusaders the other night. An artist must be something like a Crusader. The loves and pleasures other men treasure he must be ready to trample on,—that they may live again in his art. There can be no sacrifice too great. . . . There can be no compromise. . . ."

"Father!" Michael broke away to run up the path ahead of Martyn. "I hear Mr. Cortwright's flute!"

## CHAPTER III

OF A WIND AND DANCING FLOWERS—HOW KATHERYN WOULD NOT STAY TO SUPPÉR

MICHAEL, breathless in the studio door, felt for a moment that his heart had stopped beating. When it seemed to begin again, he thought the wild racing rhythm of it would smother him.

He had told Katheryn that when Philip Cortwright played his flute it was like birds singing in a wood. This afternoon the voice that filled the studio was the voice of the wind,—high, frolicsome, piping to gusty sweetness. . . .

Vague in the twilight shadows, airy as a blown flower, a little figure danced. With garments like floating petals she seemed to sway toward Michael . . . retreating, hesitating, advancing,—hands extended in elfish invitation. The light patter of her feet was like the whisper of raindrops. . . . A glance over the shoulder; —a twitter of secret laughter. . . . Provocative she poised before him! Scarcely knowing what he did he took her hand,—turned with her,—was dancing too.

Cortwright in the wide sea-window, legs astraddle, head thrown back, piped as for fairies! The glint of his rounded eyes,—caught through the half-light,—the tilt of pointed beard recalled Brentwood's expression:— "Half cousin to a goat. . . ." A faun would be that!

It was Robert's laugh brought the dance to a sudden close.

"Gad!" he applauded. "Well staged. Excellently staged!"

Philip, all hospitable attention, turned on the lights. Michael, to cover his confusion, pretended to look at the fountain. The one thing he was really conscious of was that the little dancer had followed him;—was standing near him, friendly but shy in her turn.

Cortwright, half whimsical, half rueful, was explaining to Martyn his predicament.

"Yesterday afternoon, you say? The deuce, man! That's twenty-four hours. They'll have you up for kidnapping. . . ."

"But I tell you, I haven't succeeded in getting that pose yet!" Philip's usual insouciance was no disguise for a very genuine irritation:—"What she will, she will; and what she won't the devil himself couldn't drive her to. A pretty time we've had of it. . . . Once I thought of my flute, I could make her dance all right. . . . But take off that silk thing? I believe her present determination is to be buried in it!"

Both men laughed, looking toward the children.

"All the same, I think you're mistaken about her coming from the Cove. They'd have hunted her up before this. . . . Besides, she's not the ordinary type. Some of us would have spotted her. Look at the set of the head. . . ."

His practised glance followed the curve of ivory-tinted throat, the delicately modeled ear, set close and rather back, the low full brow. . . . "And those eyes!

. . . She's a find, all right! Cheekbones a little high. . . . Wants to be filled out. . . ."

"May grow up ugly as a mud fence," Philip conceded. "No predicting any permanent quality of beauty. At present she's the most spontaneously graceful creature I've ever set eyes on. . . . That pose yesterday. . . ."

"I'll tell you who can place her if anyone can,—Kate Griffeth. She's friends with everybody at the Cove. Often takes Michael,—hunting shells and things. . . . Michael, come here a moment. Is that little girl one of the Portuguese fishers' children?"

"Father!" Michael's repudiation was indignant. "How could she be?"

"I thought not. . . . Kate's Spanish would help us out. . . . Isn't that she,—rounding the cliff?"

The footpath where it turned from the dunes to follow the outer rim of bluff was at a certain angle visible from the studio window. It was here the evening before that Kate and Michael had stood looking up at the lights. . . .

"I'll catch her!" Although it was impossible to distinguish anyone clearly, Philip had sprung through the studio door.

Martyn, a moment later, saw him running bare-headed down the path. . . . Saw the girl stop to wait where she would otherwise have turned off to her own cottage. . . .

Smiling at Philip's lively pantomime (he was bound to make a good story of it) Martyn left the window and in his turn went to look at the fountain.

Clever craftsman, Cortwright. . . . There was a virtuosity, a clean dexterity, about his work that Robert envied. Already accepted beyond most men of his age, success seemed to come to Philip without a struggle. Weary with the consciousness of his own hidden battle-ground Martyn experienced a certain cynical amusement over the evening's developments. . . . At the first obstacle the fellow took on like a spoiled kid:—which reflection would in no way prevent Martyn doing his best to straighten the tangle. . . .

The children were at the piano;—Michael striking different notes and trying to make Lisa name them. Now and then they laughed.

Katheryn's voice floating ahead through the door, Michael turned, taking Lisa by the hand:—"You mustn't be afraid." His tone was protectingly reassuring. "It's Miss Kate Griffeth,—my very best friend. . . ." Then leading her forward as Kate entered:

"This is Lisa. She has no father, she says. And God took her mother up to live with Him among the stars. . . ."

"*Pobrecita!*" Katheryn knelt, throwing back the blue cloak she wore, to slip an arm about the child.

Lisa, though she did not draw away, held herself motionless;—her great lustrous eyes, bright and enigmatic as an animal's, gazing with a sort of fearless curiosity:—

"There was a boat," Michael continued, evidently proud of his powers as interpreter, "but the waves were too high. So God took her. . . . That mother wore beautiful dresses and was young. It was she taught

Lisa to dance. Her other mother is old and ugly. . . ."

Katheryn led the children to a seat in the window. The two men exchanged glances.

"Where did he get all that, in Heaven's name?"

"Oh, a language of their own, I suppose. He's picked up a sort of pigeon-Portuguese from the children at the Cove. . . . And Kate gives him an occasional Spanish lesson. . . . I've been looking at your sea-lady. The sweep of the hair is specially good. Heard anything further from the committee?"

"They were to have come down yesterday. Letter from Lorrimer this morning. It seems Benson. . . ."

"Benson,—Good Lord! Who rung him in on you? He's sure to want to put a jacket on her. . . ."

The conversation drifting to professional channels, they were only recalled by Kate slipping past them, Lisa asleep on her arm:—

"Just dropped off, poor baby. . . . I'm going to put her to bed. I'll tell you when I come back. . . ."

When Kate did come back it was to find Philip alone; Martyn having wakened to the fact that he had overstayed himself. It was whist night. . . .

"A gypsy brat!"

"I don't think you ought to call her that. . . . It's such a confused little story. From all I can make out the old woman must be a gypsy. . . . Not her own mother. . . . ."

"But . . . Look here! Do you mean to tell me. . . ." Philip's obvious tension found vent in a sort of resentful hectoring:—"Why,—she stood in the window

this morning and watched them pass! Not a word! Not the wink of an eyelash! Sly little. . . ."

"It's odd. Everything about her seems odd. That she doesn't belong at the Cove is certain. Michael made out as much as I could. There was a boat,—but the waves were too high. So God took her mother to live among the stars. She never had any father, she says, poor mite. . . . And her 'other mother' is old—too old and ugly. . . . Then something about goats,—'*muchas, muchas cabras!*' It's hard to make anything definite. Partly, she doesn't want to tell (that's the Mexican); and partly it's such a mixed little lingo. Not a word of Portuguese,—dismiss that notion. . . . Her English, you must have noticed, is charming, both as to inflection and idiom; though she speaks with effort. Hasn't, I think, been using it lately. Spanish,—a hash. . . . Sometimes as good as her English; sometimes nothing but the commonest *pelado* brand. Then she'll begin to chatter,—a different tongue altogether;—which was what put me on the gypsy trail. . . ."

"'Gone!' That was what she said. I remember, now;—and looked up to see how I'd take it. . . . Gone! Well, they are gone . . . with a full day's start. . . ."

"And evidently in a hurry. Owen and I saw them break camp this morning. It was one of his bad nights. Sometimes when he can't sleep, a walk before breakfast. . . . We came on them hustling out of a gully,—just beyond Abalone Point. . . ."

"That would fit in with where I found her. . . ."

"There was something out of the way. The women all chattering,—very much excited. One bony old thing

scolding, trying to make them do her way. . . . But the men wouldn't listen. . . . Just hurried them along."

"Gone,—like floating weed. . . ." The phrase repeated itself mechanically. Philip did not remember it was what he had said that morning to Lisa. . . . "Well, nobody can expect me to take any responsibility. There must be institutions. . . ."

"Oh, not that! Can't you see? Whatever the story, she isn't the sort for an institution. . . . They've picked her up,—kidnapped her perhaps. . . . We may never know. . . . But an institution! Can you imagine all that champagne bottled up in a brown holland uniform? . . . one among a hundred with cropped heads? I'd take her myself, first. . . . To Owen she'd be worth. . . ."

Philip's face cleared. He held out his hand:—

"Stay and take supper," he said. "I don't know when I've been so cross. . . . You must admit the experience somewhat upsetting to a bachelor's equilibrium. But finding's keeping. I shan't give her up,—till I get that dance, anyway. . . ."

The fact that both Katheryn and Martyn recognized unusual attributes in his protégée revived his own enthusiasm. The gypsy theory, startling at first blush, might after all prove an advantage. While it could in no way be held to lessen his claim to control of the child, it did definitely relieve him of responsibility. Before everything else Cortwright was an artist. After that he ruled his life according to what best suited his comfort and convenience.

His mother had been Greek; his father an English-

man,—with a nose distantly reminiscent of the Hebraic. A man of unusual culture and business acumen, he had amassed both fortune and reputation as a dealer in antiques. Philip's happy heritage included not only an apt facility for executing what was beautiful; but the still rarer talent of making people glad to acquire his work at his own estimate of its worth. Frankly a hedonist, he had so far experienced no difficulty in fitting his life to his philosophy.

All good temper again, aglow with genial hospitality, he threw another log on the fire,—drew up a chair,—would have taken Katheryn by the hand and led her to it:—

"Stay and eat supper,—that's my friend! I'll make you the prettiest omelet! . . ."

Kate smiled, shook her head. "Owen's waiting. . . ."

"Will it hurt him to wait,—one evening?"

"It would hurt me. . . ."

"Well, isn't that Christian—to prefer to hurt one's self, rather than one's enemy? I shall be most horribly hurt, if you do go. . . ."

"What makes you say 'enemy'?"

"That's easy. If you were my friend, I shouldn't have to constrain you. . . ."

"I have many friends I don't take supper with." Still smiling, she backed away from him toward the door.

Philip followed. The candid independence of the girl, giving not an inch to his advances, piqued his interest. He liked her long clever hands, the expressive irregularity of her features. To-night the straight falling

lines of blue cloak, an unwonted softness in the dark eyes, gave almost a Madonna look. . . .

"Do stay, Kate!" It was the first time he had ever assumed intimacy enough to call her that. "You don't know what a help you are to me!" There was something almost boyish in the appeal;—in the quick step he took to slip behind her and turn laughing, barring the passage with extended arm:—"How I value your friendship. . . . Someway, it seems to open new vistas. . . . Every time I meet you, you make me revise my whole conception of women. . . . There aren't any others like you, I believe!"

"If I stayed, you'd find me out! It is only by going I can hope to keep so flattering an opinion. . . ." She still spoke lightly; did not so much as raise her hand to touch his arm, or take even another forward step. Yet somehow it was very definite.

Philip colored a little and moved aside. He liked to carry a point. Besides he was not accustomed to having his invitations refused by ladies. . . .

"Well, if you won't. . . ." He wasn't going to seem sulky about it. "But there's a kindness I'm sure you'll not refuse. Come up in the morning and help me get that pose. She'll do for you what she won't for me. . . ."

"I'm sorry." Again Kate shook her head. "I'll help any other way."

"Good Lord!" Cortwright made no attempt this time to hide that he was nettled. "You can't mean you disapprove!"

"Of course not. It's what any of us who had her

would expect. . . . But it's something that you and she must settle between you. What I mean is,—you'll admit there is a safeguard in the instinct that keeps her from being willing to? Well then . . . it's up to you to make her see it your way. And—and—how shall I put it?" She laughed on a low breath:—"The Queen of Spain, remember, had no legs. . . . Mexicans of the better class remain very Spanish. There are no more conservative women under the sun. . . . You do understand? That she doesn't want to,—poor little stray, —is—is a sort of *character* (I can't think of any other word) for that mother who lives with God among the stars. . . . Good night!"

She was gone. . . .

## CHAPTER IV

### HOW MAMÁ SOLEDAD CAME BACK FOR LISA—AND THE STARS ARE NOTHING BUT BALLS OF FIRE

NATURALLY, there were as many different opinions as to what Cortwright ought to do about his little dancer as there were people to discuss the question.

"Picked up like a stray kitten, by Jove!" was Smalley's favorite version. "Saucer of milk and a ribbon round the neck,—there you are! Asked him outright if he intended to adopt her. Not a thought of such a thing. . . . Well then,—where does he stand? What's his legal claim,—supposing anybody wanted to dispute it?"

"Who's likely to dispute it?" Martyn walked abruptly to the window and back, as was his restless way. He never could work sitting down. When he talked he didn't concentrate. . . . "Rather deuced clever,—if you come to that. For so seemingly careless a chap, Cortwright has a positive flair for the expedient. The rôle of benevolent patron suits, at present. . . . If he tires of it. . . ."

Brentwood shifted uneasily in his chair. "Somehow, I can't feel that's altogether right. Ought to be some-

thing done to find out the true story,—in justice to the child. . . ."

The afternoon before, calling on Cortwright, Lisa had come to stand at his knee; had looked up into his face with that strange dark gaze of hers; had slipped a quick little brown hand into his pocket and found—a cooky!

Brentwood told her he had brought it to feed the sandpipers.

"Sandpipers live on the beach," she corrected him. "You brought it for me!"

One might almost have believed she had forgotten her Spanish. After the first week or two she rarely used it,—except in a quick flare of anger now and then, or to emphasize some sought-for word. . . .

"Talk about women being the romantic sex!" Judith, who had at first petted Lisa, much as she might have petted Smalley's "stray kitten," would now, with as little compunction, have seen the child thrown into the street. . . . There was no reason for the change; unless it could be called a reason that Michael had taken to dreaming of her:— "From Michael up, she has you all bewitched. Little brown faced gypsy! As if it were any clue her talking English. . . . They pick up everything. . . ."

"Even to the wash on your back fence!" Smalley's smart cackle evinced his usual appreciation of his own wit.

It was on complaint of a farmer's wife, over Val Verde way, Cortwright had ascertained, that county officers had set out for an early morning visit to the

gypsy camp. Warned in some mysterious fashion, the band was up and off. . . . This would account for the abandonment of the child; for the hurry and excitement noticed by Kate and her brother. Once over the line into Lower California, one might as easily have tried to follow a bunch of quail. Cortwright's seemingly careless attitude of acquiescence had its excuses. Nor was it long before this attitude was to change.

Though he never succeeded in getting the sea-gull pose ("I was dancing for myself!" Lisa dismissed the matter) chance was to betray to him a weakness of which he promptly took advantage to bribe her to his will.

Money apparently meant little to the child. But one day on a visit to the city Cortwright good-naturedly bought for her a little bead chain. The pattern was of daisies, blue and white with gold centers. He paid fifteen cents for it. . . . Lisa was in raptures.

"I will give it to you for your very own,—if you will be a good girl and do as I say. . . ."

Next morning she posed for him in her sweet child nakedness.

Cortwright would let no one see his work till he had finished it. He called it "The Dewdrop." Among the men at San Miguel it produced a sensation. Indeed, it was the first of that series of exquisite child interpretations which was to place his name foremost among the younger group of American sculptors.

Lisa ran some danger of becoming spoiled. Bewitching in her illusive vivacity, for the time being she had them all at her feet. So far as Michael was concerned,

Judith's complaint was justified. The boy lived, breathed, dreamed, for only one thing;—neglected his practising and his meals, accepted scoldings and punishments. . . . Nothing mattered but that he should be with her.

Lisa, always shy of any demonstration of affection, came to watch for him. The two children were constantly together. They developed an annoying habit of sudden vanishings. Several times Cortwright, ready for work, found his little model missing. . . .

One late summer afternoon he had waited for her till dusk. At last she came running in, her dark eyes aflame,—palpitating to a sort of excited triumph.

"Where have you been?" Cortwright spoke sharply. "You knew I wanted you."

Lisa laughed, half dancing away from him. It was instinctive with her to tease.

Cortwright, losing his temper completely, reached out and shook her by the arm:—

"You are a naughty girl! Don't I give you pretty clothes and good things to eat? Who would take care of you, if it wasn't for me?"

She looked into his face a moment. Then:—"I don't have to stay with you, if I don't want," she flashed with equal resentment. "I can go to Michael's house and let his father paint me. He was painting my picture this afternoon."

"Painting your picture?" Cortwright found this impossible to believe. "What do you mean?"

He drew her to a chair, placing her between his knees.

"He was painting my picture," Lisa repeated. "And I like him better than you. He gave me some flowers in a basket to hold,—and a beautiful red sash and a yellow dress!"

Jamming on his hat Cortwright went direct to Martyn. He was too hot to be reasonable.

"By Gad!" Martyn laughed about it afterward to Brentwood. "Never saw anything so idiotic as the way the chap carried on! I tried to explain it was the merest accident. . . . She happened to be here playing with Michael. I had a magazine cover to get off. Never dreamed he'd object. How in blazes could it clash with his work? . . . Mind you, it wasn't that he'd been kept waiting. I told him I knew nothing about that. Simply he was mad clear through that anybody should presume to use *his* model. . . . Hang it all,—he actually threatened to get out an injunction! After that I lost my temper, too. . . ."

The quarrel resulted in the children being forbidden to play together.

"Listen to me, Michael," Martyn explained to his son. "You bother Mr. Cortwright going to his studio so much. Besides which you're neglecting your work,—not doing anything that's any good. Your mother and I have talked to you about it often enough. This morning I mean what I say. If I ever hear of your being with Lisa again, I shall whip you. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, father, "Michael answered, rather white about the lips. As soon as Martyn was safely at work he slipped from the house to scud down to the beach. . . .

He and Lisa had agreed the evening before they would meet next morning in their "secret cave."

The rocky coast at San Miguel was riddled with caves and crevasses. The one adopted by Michael and Lisa had a fine sand floor and a high roof. On one side was a passage so low and narrow a dog could scarcely crawl through. The children made it on hands and knees. The opposite entrance was beautiful and wide,—a great arch, giving on a smooth ledge of beach, so shut in by jutting cliffs that at certain stages of the tide it was quite cut off from the rest of the shore.

The children had decorated the cave with shells and festoons of salty kelp. It was here they loved to hide; Michael to avoid practising, Lisa to escape the long hours of posing that seemed to her so tiresome. Mist or sunshine, she would always have been out of doors,—dancing along the wet sands, scrambling over the cliffs hunting gulls or squirrels' nests. . . . Of a wetting she had no more fear than a sandpiper. Springing lightly from rock to rock, she would look back at Michael, shake the hair out of her eyes and laugh. . . . Yet hardy and indefatigable as she was in the open, an hour's work in the studio left her drooping like a wilted flower. . . .

Sometimes, in his fanciful boy's way, Michael wondered whether after all, Lisa's mother might not have been some kind of seabird. For all her daring she was timid, easily startled. . . . "You mustn't be afraid," he would say to her. "I'll take care of you. . . . I'll take care of you always. . . ."

This morning the tide was up. Flat on the stretch of sunny sands Michael knew himself safe. He lay there waiting a long time. . . . Either in the face of Cortwright's orders Lisa didn't dare try to get away, or she had forgotten. But Michael wasn't going back to stay shut up practising in the tent-house on such a morning. . . .

They were talking of Germany again. What should he do if they sent him to Germany,—away from Lisa!

It would kill him, he thought. If a day went by without seeing her, he was lost. He dreamed of her every night. . . . He did not care any more about being a great musician. He did not care if his father whipped him;—though it had frightened and humiliated him that the threat should be made. . . .

As soon as he was really grown up, he would tell Lisa how he loved her,—and they would be married when he was twenty-one years old. A man could do as he pleased when he was twenty-one. . . . She had already promised to be his sweetheart. But if she cared anything for him,—why did she not come? She did not care! She was always laughing, and dancing, and teasing! She had never let him kiss her,—not once. . . .

The first night he dreamed of her, he thought the room was full of music. But when he sprang out of bed there was no music. . . . It was Lisa laughing and shaking her hair. He tried to follow her then, as he so often followed her over the rocks. . . . But there was a dark place. . . . Everything was dark! It was too horrible. . . . He stretched out his arms and sobbed

aloud, crying:—"Lisa! Lisa!" When he opened his eyes, his mother was beside him. . . .

Next morning Michael did not eat any breakfast. He could not eat because he knew that he had broken his Resolution. His Resolution had been never, never to love any girl at all. . . . If only he could answer one thing!

Was it because his father forgot, he didn't kiss his mother any more? Not even for birthdays! . . . Why shouldn't she sometimes have gone walking, too? It was only Michael and his father who went. When they came back, his mother would wait awhile. Then:—"What did you talk about?" she would ask. And in a little while again:—"What did your father say?" Michael did not know how to answer, because often they had not been talking at all. . . .

His mother's beautiful face was thin,—and there were lines about the mouth. . . . It was worse than a sore throat,—after he had gone to bed at night,—the things that she would say! Michael slept on the screen-porch outside the studio window. . . . It kept him awake,—just being afraid she was going to begin! Most times his father would not open his lips. . . .

But a few nights ago Michael had heard a chair pushed back;—heard his father spring up, walk the length of the room and turn:—"My God!" The voice would have frightened anybody. . . . "Let it be New York, then,—if that's what you want. For the sort of stuff I'm doing, Hell, or any other place, would be the same!"

So they were planning to go to New York,—and to send him to Germany. . . .

"Michael! Michaël!"

He leapt to his feet. . . . Lisa in the great arch of the cavern was calling to him.

"Michael! Come here quick! Oh, I have a secret. . . . I would not tell it to anybody but you, Michael!"

He went to her slowly. He would not let himself hurry.

"I've been waiting for ever and ever," he said.

"I couldn't come before. Something happened." Lisa took him by the hand to draw him into the dimly lighted cave. Here she made him sit down and began to whisper in his ear: "My Mamá Soledad is back. I met her this morning,—while I was coming to you. . . . She wants me to go away with her. Michael, you come, too."

Michael knew more about Lisa's life with the gypsies than anybody else. Long summer afternoons they spent in the cave together, it was of this they talked most. . . . Of Mamá Soledad, who was old and ugly, but never let anybody lay a finger to Lisa except herself. Of Morella Demetrio, "the bad girl," with whom Lisa used to fight. Once Lisa had bitten a piece out of Morella's ear; and Mamá Soledad had beaten her for that. But Lisa did not care, because afterwards Morella was afraid to fight her. She was bigger than Lisa, —ever so much bigger; but Lisa could abuse her and call her names, and Morella was afraid to fight back. She tried to get Secundio Silva to fight Lisa. But Sylvestre Reyes beat Secundio up. So then Lisa could call Secundio names, too. . . .

Morella thought herself so smart! She was always trying to find out things. She said when she grew up she was going to tell *la buenaventura*,—like Mamá Soledad. . . . Once when the gypsies were camped near a graveyard Morella made a hole in one of the graves, and put her ear down to hear what the dead people were talking about! But Lisa would not listen. She ran away. . . . If you picked up a stick floating on the water, that meant you would beat up your enemy. . . . But if you found a piece of red seaweed you would soon get a sweetheart. . . .

"Manuel found a piece of red seaweed. Would you take him for your sweetheart?" Michael found it hard to get the words out. It was as if someone had tied a string about his heart. . . .

"Oh, no!" Lisa laughed and shook back her hair.

Manuel was one of the Portuguese fisher boys.

"Would you take me, Lisa?"

From under her long lashes she looked at him with a slow smile.

So Michael spent a whole week hunting. He found pieces; but they were not good enough. . . . When he had what he wanted, he made it into a necklace and dipped it into the sea. Dripping, sparkling with salty spray it was more beautiful than if it had been made of coral. Lisa let him fasten it about her throat. But he must not kiss her! If he would sit down beside her, she would tell him about the place where the gypsies lived:—

You had to go to it in boats . . . and there were rocks . . . and water,—water all around. "Yes, *una*

*isla*," Lisa had not thought of the right name. And there were "*cabras* there,—*muchas, muchas cabras.* . . ." That was the place the gypsies liked to stay. . . . "But they were not really my people," Lisa always finished. "It was just to take care of me, after the waves were so high and my pretty other mother fell out of the boat. . . ."

Now Mamá Soledad had come back for Lisa. . . . She was waiting down the beach with Sylvestre and the little gray burro,—so Lisa need not be tired. . . . "But, oh, Michael, you come, too! Then nobody can scold us. . . . And your father will not whip you. . . ."

Shortly after noon, Cortwright indignantly seeking his runaway model came on Kate Griffeth under a cedar with a book. She told him where the children could probably be found:—

"But don't be too hard on them! Didn't you ever have a secret cave? Better walk along the ridge to Look Out Rock;—if they're on the beach you can't help seeing them from there. . . . The way they wriggle through that tunnel! Owen and I have laughed. . . . Well,—why should we tell? Where's the fun, if one can't sometimes run away!"

It was from Look Out Rock Cortwright got them;—just in time.

The old woman had the sense to know her game was up. Her attention attracted by the gentleman's angry shouts and excited gesticulations, she stood waiting impassively for him to toboggan down the bluff. Lisa, very white in the face, slid from the back of the donkey.

Michael pretended to hunt for sandcrabs,—digging with his toes.

The gypsy boy, a wild lithe fellow, perhaps a year or two older than Michael,—had sprung like a cat to the edge of the cliff. Here he hung, looking back, his quick eyes gleaming under a shock of shaggy hair; ready at the first sign of trouble to take to his heels. . . .

"It's a state prison offense," Cortwright blustered. "I'll have you know it means twenty years in the pen if you or any other of your impudent tribe so much as poke your noses into these parts again. . . ."

Old Soledad straightened. She was taller than most Mexican gypsies. Despite dirt and rags,—ageworn, battered, slovenly,—there was a sort of natural dignity and freedom of air. So far, she had evinced the usual stolid unresponsiveness of the average, low-class, border Mexican, to whom an assumed ignorance of English may appear convenient. Now she found tongue:—

"*Señor*, it is not so. Nobody can put me in prison for taking *la niñita*. . . . She is my grandchild,—the little one of my only son. . . ."

Cortwright glanced keenly from Lisa to the hag. Certainly, there was no physical resemblance. . . . Except perhaps,—in the carriage. . . ? Yet even here it was like comparing the slim grace of some green and growing shoot to the stricken decrepitude of a ruined tree. . . .

"And her mother?—a gypsy, too?"

"*Sí, sí, señor.* What else? The mother was from the South,—a poor sickly thing. . . . She died before the little one was two hours old. Less than a year later

my son was killed in a fight. It is to me *la muchachita* owes everything. She was not easy to raise. . . . Things have gone hard. . . ."

Cortwright shot an abrupt question or two. They haggled and bargained. The old woman, a new light in her eyes, declared the little one was more to her than all the world. . . .

Sylvestre, swinging to the sands, slipped a sly hand into Michael's pocket. He grinned and winked at Lisa, —trying to draw her attention to the knife he had frisked. But both she and Michael were too absorbed watching the others to notice him.

It ended in Cortwright turning on Michael and ordering him home, while the rest of the party went on to the studio. Here, after another brisk bout of bargaining, Philip paid twenty dollars to the old woman,—all the cash he happened to have on hand,—which was accepted by her as full purchase price for the child.

After the gypsies had gone, Cortwright felt he had let himself be beaten out of too much. The old woman would probably have been glad to get off with ten. In addition to this he was still angry at Lisa, and intended that she should be punished. The child was spoiled beyond endurance. She must be taught her place. He came and stood behind her where she had stationed herself in the window to watch the last of the gypsies as they disappeared along the shore:—

"Twenty dollars is a great deal of money," he said coldly. "There are not many men who would give it for a little gypsy girl. I know all about your story, now. You heard your grandmother tell me. So we

will have no more nonsense. . . . As to the stars" (the first white stars of evening were pricking the faint blue above the cliff), "it's time you understood they are nothing but balls of fire. No one could possibly live in them. You must stop romancing about the past, and understand that you belong to me. You are a very lucky little girl that I should be willing to buy you away from such a life. . . ."

She turned on him, then, tense, quivering, furious, with all a child's inarticulate sense of outrage:—

"You couldn't buy me!" she cried. "I hate you! . . . Oh, I hate you! It doesn't matter if you pay *much much* money. . . . You couldn't buy me. . . . I belong to myself!"

Before he could stop her she had fled past him to the little room (his old trunk-room), that had been fitted up for her use. Here she flung herself upon the floor,—weeping, screaming, beating with hands and feet. . . .

It wasn't what he had said about her being nothing but a gypsy. . . . Mamá Soledad told lies. . . . Lisa shrewdly guessed Mr. Cortwright himself only half believed them. . . . But, oh, if the stars were nothing but balls of fire,—if no one could live in them,—that was like losing her beautiful, young, dimly remembered mother all over again! And if Lisa had not her mother, —what had she?

She lay on the floor and wept a long time; her angry sobs dying at last to a low occasional whimper. . . .

Would Michael's father really whip him? Mamá Soledad had sometimes whipped Lisa. You hunched

your shoulders. It was soon over. . . . But Michael with his white skin,—his gentle ways. . . .

"Tell your father you went fishing with Manuel at the Cove," had been Lisa's advice. "He'll never know."

"That would be a story. I don't tell stories." This was before they had finally made up their minds about running away.

"No, of course not. Neither do I. . . ." Which was a pretty big one in itself! But Lisa was determined Michael must think well of her,—or he might never ask to kiss her again. . . .

As it happened, Michael did get his whipping. And in three days he, his father and mother had started for New York. From there he was to be sent to Germany. He was kept a prisoner in his room till he left, and not permitted to see Lisa again.

## CHAPTER V

### TALKING ABOUT FAIRIES

IT was as natural for Lisa to dance as for the ripples of the sea. She danced for Cortwright when he played his flute; she "danced for herself," light and tireless as a water-nymph on the damp sands in front of her "secret cave. . . ."

"One would almost believe that child has had stage training," Brentwood once suggested. "How else account for the suppleness, the practised muscular control? Look at her on her toes. . . ."

"All gypsy girls dance," Cortwright dismissed the supposition. "It's part of their stock in trade; that with fortune-telling and a few other inherent proclivities. . . ."

Since his interview with old Soledad, speculation as to Lisa's antecedents frankly irritated him. Such inquiries as were possible he had made. There being no way to disprove the gypsy's story, the practical attitude was to accept it and let the child start new. Forgetting the past, she would sooner accommodate herself to the present. His good twenty dollars, he considered, entitled him to that much.

Not that Philip any longer grudged the price. With Michael's elimination Lisa had settled down. Once hav-

ing made up her mind to accept the drudgery of artist's model, she brought to her task a plastic grace, an intuitive dramatic instinct, that infused an entirely new element into Cortwright's work. Hitherto recognized chiefly for its refined and brilliant execution, there was a fresh loveliness, a sort of sweet and innocent appeal, about his present conceptions that seemed to breathe the very soul of childhood itself.

Philip recognized and responded to the impulse,—working with a flair, an insatiable capacity. Never very considerate of his models, he made no exception in Lisa's case; sometimes holding her to a difficult pose till she was numb, rigid, almost paralyzed with fatigue. This may have been simply the thoughtlessness of egotism; it may have been part of a well-considered discipline. Lisa, either through ignorance, or a sort of natural stoicism, did not complain. For his successes Philip rewarded her with all kinds of gay trinkets and injudicious finery which fed her child's vanity; exciting but never quite satisfying her. There was nothing expensive about the presents;—Cortwright being of a frugal turn.

The relation between the two was unusual. Lisa, always slow to love or trust, had a long memory,—particularly for anything she regarded as an injury. She did what Cortwright told her, because she had discovered the consequences to be unpleasant when she rebelled. She had not the slightest scruple about deceiving him; and there was nothing she enjoyed more than an opportunity to tease.

He, for his part, was proud of her; especially if the

attention she attracted reflected back in any way on himself or his work. He was also decidedly jealous; quick to resent outside interference. Without in the least understanding the psychology of the child, he gained a curious ascendency over her will. By the end of the first year, it flattered him to believe he held the whip hand. Lisa was weaned from her memories. . . .

Yet it was at this very time she was meeting Sylvestre, the gypsy boy, in her "secret cave." Sylvestre called himself Lisa's brother; and he really was old Soledad's grandson:—

"The devil! He can't keep you if you want to go," Sylvestre explained. "That was only a slick way of getting twenty dollars. *Hola!* Did you think it was forever? A man buys a canary. . . . Next month, perhaps, it flies away! Very well,—what can he do? Look,—if you're ever wanting us,—make this sign. . . ." He practised her in a curious arrangement of pebbles and seashells. "We'll be passing back by here. . . ."

Lisa shook her head. In her way she was fond of Sylvestre. Always, on the Island in the old days, it was he who took her part; protecting her against the sharp tricks of the other gypsy children, fighting her battles with Morella Demetrio and Secundio Silva. . . . But, having known Michael, there was something almost repellent to her now, in the wild ragged presence of her onetime chum. Curiously enough, it was the memory of Michael, quite as much as any secret fear of Cortwright, that kept her from trying to run away this second time. Also, for all her romanticism, Lisa was a

practical little person. Though she resented posing as work, she realized her present life was much better than the old one,—wandering about with the gypsies.

"Not now," she said. "I don't want to come back now. Perhaps I will some day. And I'll not forget. . . ." She rearranged the pebbles and seashells as he had shown her:—"Be sure and tell Morella I have six rings! One of them has a pearl, and two have opals in them. . . ."

Naturally, Cortwright could not be always at San Miguel. With his growing popular reputation, outside interests, both professional and social, increased. When he went away, he would send Lisa down to stay with Kate Griffeth. The shabby little shack among the cedars came to be more like a home to the child than anything she had conscious memory of.

She posed for Owen. He never thought of giving her presents. With him it was like some delightful game:—

"I'm looking for a fairy," he'd begin. . . .

It was for Kate's translation of Spanish folk-tales they were working; Cortwright having given his permission with a sort of generous flourish, though it was Brentwood who had fathered the idea and put them in touch with a publisher favorably disposed toward it.

While Owen sketched he would talk to Lisa, embroidering his legend with all sorts of quaint and personal embellishments. It was like being part of a real true fairy story! And he never let her get tired. He knew too well what that felt like.

Indeed, between them, it was generally he who gave

out first. The lines about his nose and mouth would deepen. The dark circles under his eyes would spread. He would begin to pant, and stop,—and pant again. . . .

"God, if I could only work!" he'd cry. "All the fools in the world who can work . . . and don't want to!"

At last he would fling down his brushes and get out on his couch on the porch and lie there in the sunshine, his thin hands over his face. Then Lisa would steal out, too, and sit beside him on the floor,—quiet as a mouse. . . .

One day when he had been lying that way even longer than usual, he turned,—to find her still squatting there her great eyes fixed upon him.

"It's the things . . . I . . . wanted to do. . . ." he said, slowly, painfully. "I—can't give them up! I can't give them up. . . ." And hardly were the words out of his mouth than followed one of his dauntless triumphant flashes: "I *don't* give them up, Kiddo!

*"If a star were confined within a tomb*
*Her captive flames must need burn there!*
*But when the hand that lockt her up gives room,*
*She'll shine through all the sphere."*

Lisa hadn't any idea what he might be talking about. Snapdragon (her favorite name for him) was always saying "poetries," which she supposed he made up himself. . . .

Is there anything more terrible than the daily fluctuations of hope and despair? The silent heartbreak of

watching some loved one struggle,—at grips with death? Kate would admit to no one that Owen was losing ground. "It was the winter fogs," she said. Others spoke of a mild winter. "He always picks up with spring. . . . I count the days!"

This to Steven Spanach, who had come to say goodbye. He was going "home." Everybody was sorry,—and a little surprised, too. They couldn't have said exactly why, except that in those pre-war days Serbia had a remote and rather vaguely violent sound. . . .

"My father, he's getting old man, now. Plenty of trouble over there! It's nicer painting pictures in California. . . . *But!* Goodbye, *comrade!*" Owen's wasted hand was lost in the warm encompassing grasp: —"Goodbye, *comrade!*" was all there was left of the Revolution,—their "new City of Friends," since Owen had no breath for shouting any longer.

That was the way it was with them at San Miguel. They came and went. . . . A few months' pleasant intimacy. A tiff or two, perhaps. And so "goodbye!" . . . Kate could not help wishing it had been Smalley. There didn't seem much chance. Having fallen heir to most of Stephen's unportable paraphernalia the little gossip appeared more firmly rooted than ever,—more detestably cocky. . . . He had even sold a picture! An unfinished seascape of Spanach's, Philip maintained.

It was a chill morning in February that Owen fainted at his easel. . . . Nothing but the smell of the turpentine,—the closed windows. "He wouldn't give up. . . ." In half an hour he returned to work,—and fainted again. . . .

That afternoon Kate asked Brentwood if he thought it possible the number of line drawings could be cut down. And on a rush that came close to a touch of the tragic she told. . . . "Oh, if only he would rest!" Before the answering concern in his eyes her own dropped. Suddenly it had come to her,—what it meant having someone one could tell!

The number of line drawings *was* cut down and the full page color plates reduced from eight to six. Somehow, the work struggled on. Lisa dancing about the room would say:—"Snapdragon's getting pretty. He has such red cheeks!"

The majority of us as we grow older learn what it is to live in the shadow of life's sadness. To this brother and sister the shadows were gathering early. . . . For all their courage, they could not sometimes but be appalled; and the brightness of the child's unsuspecting presence helped them through the days. Kate, who had always mothered Michael, found it entirely natural, despite a multitude of other demands to take Lisa under her wing.

She taught her to read (Cortwright, laughing, admitted he would never have thought of that. . . .), to write and "do sums." Lisa learned with an apt docility that was surprising.

"I don't want to grow up not to know anything," she confided to Owen:—"like those poor little fisher children at the Cove. If you know things, people can't cheat you so much!"

"What do you intend to be when you grow up?"

"I intend to be a pretty lady," looking at herself in

the mirror, from the reflection of which Owen sometimes preferred to work. . . ." And have a great many friends,—rich gentlemen, you know, who will give me presents and take me out riding. . . ."

In some dim, subconscious way the child was thinking back;—though she herself, in all probability, had no idea what prompted her answer. Even had she known, Lisa never spoke of her mother any more;—not since that night Mr. Cortwright told about the stars. . . .

"You have plenty of friends now. Do you like those best who are rich and give you presents?"

Lisa shook her head, smiling. It was Snapdragon she liked best. But Mr. Brentwood was very nice, too. Only the day before he had come to take her out in his beautiful new car.

For himself Brentwood would never have thought of a car. But one day Katheryn happened to speak of how Owen missed getting out, now he was no longer up to their old rambles.

Brentwood did not say anything; just looked at her in his kind, understanding way. The following week he went to San Diego; returning in the first automobile San Miguel could boast. This was before an endless chain of motorists claimed the beach highways. Lisa felt very grand when he took her out with him.

Cortwright was a little impatient of Brentwood. If the truth must be confessed, he was impatient of Owen, as well. Sick people got on his nerves. There was something positively haunting in the boy's burning eyes, his hollow cough, his tragic, frustrated ardors. Be-

sides, Owen had never liked Philip;—never taken the pains to pretend he did. . . .

For these reasons, though Philip continued to stop at the cottage it was generally to get Kate to go out. All winter he'd been working top-steam with big plans ahead;—an exhibit in New York; if New York proved auspicious, on to Paris! . . . A walk with Kate both rested and stimulated him:—

"Oh, come along on!" he'd sing out, sunny afternoons, from the foot of the shabby porch steps. "I know your soul must be longing for the sight of a stranded clam!" It amused him to poke fun at her love for sea-things. . . .

And some days, when Owen was feeling "better," Kate would go.

From the first there had been a sort of gay give-and-take between these two,—a parry and thrust,—as if each were on guard, privately determined the vibrating consciousness of mutual attraction should find no outlet other than that of merry warfare. It is possible this surface lightness *was* kept up of deliberate purpose; that both feared, had they not held themselves to it, either might be caught, swept out, to some stronger, deeper current.

One evening, swinging along the shore, a tang of salt on their lips, their sweater pockets damp and bulging with the cockles they had found, Cortwright put out his hand to stop Kate as she turned toward the rickety flight of steps,—the shortest cut home:—

"I say,—don't. . . ."

"Don't what?" The wind had whipped the color into

her face. A sudden gust caught her skirts, swirling them about her.

"You're always so ready to cut it short, Kate! If we go up those steps, it will be over . . . in seven minutes. But if we go on and take the trail to the top of the cliff,—that means tea at the studio. . . . Hot buttered toast and marmalade! And I can show you what I've got started. . . ."

"You and your hot buttered toast! Get thee behind me. . . ."

"To be told to go to the devil by a young lady!"

"*That* wasn't what I said. . . ." Her eyes swept the far stretches of the sea,—beaten dark and flat by the gale,—with here and there a tossed feather of foam. . . . Alight with the beauty of it all they came back to him. . . . Beautiful herself in any accepted sense of the word Kate was not;—but "different" he thought from any other woman! Poised against the wind there was a strength, a youthful nobility and power. . . .

"By Heaven! You could help me if you would. . . ."

*"But wisest Fate says 'No;*
*This must not yet be so. . . .'"*

she quoted with a touch of gentle raillery. And then:—"I *will* run up sometime. Tonight,—you know I can't. Besides, Mr. Brentwood is coming. . . ."

"Isn't Papa pretty generally on deck?" Cortwright himself was surprised at his sudden flare of contemptuous irritation. "You're banking on him to put your book over, of course; and I don't count. . . ."

She looked at him queerly, then; the smile on her lips only making her face the sadder:—

"Mr. Brentwood doesn't think that,—about the book! He *never* has to have things explained. . . ."

"Kate! That's not fair. Do you expect a man like me to play Brentwood's rôle of Father Confessor? Oh, you're only half a woman, I believe. . . ." Suddenly, he seized her hands, pressed them against his lips, kissing them passionately. "Perhaps,—perhaps some day you'll wake up!"

"You—mustn't say such things! I—must go back . . . to Owen. . . ."

Her voice failed. He knew she was trembling,—that it was to hide the tears she turned from him—ran ahead up the steps. . . .

Philip stood looking after her. He had gone farther than he had intended. It was the confounded barrier she always put up. . . . Well, the remedy for that was,—he could keep away. . . .

The spring for which Katheryn had longed and waited made little difference to Owen. He could no longer get out, even in Mr. Brentwood's car. They had had to give up the sketches. . . .

"Oh, if the winds would only stop blowing!" Others spoke of a beautiful spring. "How can he get strong,—in this wind?"

"There's the desert," Brentwood suggested.

She shook her head. "We did try Arizona. He's determined to stick it out here. . . ."

The walks with Philip had been given up, by mutual

consent apparently. Kate never left the house any more, except for necessary marketing trips, hurried through, frugally. Even Brentwood had no idea how narrow was her margin. . . . With only half the promised number of illustrations, the publisher still expressed himself "interested." He must not be kept waiting. They *had* to have the money to see them through the summer. . . . But to work with a wolf at your heart!

One morning late in May there were errands in the village that could no longer be put off. As usual, Brentwood had called for Katheryn, since the car saved the long pull up the cliff which in the old days had been nothing but pleasure. As they swept down the hill, they saw Lisa running toward the cottage. The little girl stopped to wave to them.

Mr. Cortwright did not need her that morning. She had planned a surprise for Snapdragon. . . . Careful not to make any noise she stole in the back way and changed to a fairy costume Kate had improvised for the folk-tales. . . .

Owen had had a bad night with fever and much pain. Yet he had insisted on rising as usual; had dressed himself with many a gasping pause, and finally got out to his couch on the porch. Far against the billowing brightness of the sea, gull's wings flashed in the sun. It was a morning that seemed to hang above the world like a sapphire pendant on a chain of gold. . . .

"Snapdragon! Do you see anything?"

He turned then and lay watching the little figure that pirouetted in the sunlight;—alive, vibrant, sensitive,—

piquant face and dark flashing eyes inviting his admiration. The dress was too short for her. She had had to pin it together in the back. Lisa was growing up. . . .

With a low curtsy the dance ended;—she ran to him, settling like some bright-eyed bird at his side.

"Kiddo, I believe you've had another birthday! You're hardly a little girl any more at all. . . ."

"Fairies don't have birthdays. Nobody knows how old I am."

This was true. And seemed likely to remain so. . . .

"Isn't there anything you remember? Try to think, Kiddo. . . . Before you were in that boat with your mother. . . ?"

Her lips quivered. She turned away her face.

"Isn't there *anything?*"

"There's—something. . . ." in a voice the shyest of whispers "like what . . . you dream. . . . This dress, —that other time I had one. Lights and people. . . . Oh, so many people! There was music, too. I had wings and danced. My mother was a fairy. She went to sleep. . . . The funny burro-man. . . ."

"*Midsummer Night's Dream! Lyda Leigh! The San Francisco!*"

Owen jerked up on his elbow . . . and began to cough,—a little dry choking cough. . . . Then came the blood,—so sudden,—so terrifying! It stained Lisa's dress. . . .

"Snapdragon! *Oh, Snapdragon!*"

Ghastly with pallor he sank back. . . . A mist

blurred his eyes. But the old light flared again. . . . He struggled, half raising himself:—

"It's all right, Kiddo. I don't. . . ."

A moment more of labored breathing.

"Snapdragon!"

She knew he did not hear. In her fairy dress and crumpled wings she crouched beside him. . . .

Cortwright had a horror of funerals. Owen's sudden death coming before any of them expected it, shocked him very much.

He wrote a sympathetic note to Katheryn, explaining how sorry he was business should call him away at such a time. Then he took a flying trip North. He liked San Francisco,—had friends there. It would be an opportunity to talk over the Paris plan. . . . When he returned to San Miguel a fortnight later, it was to learn that Kate and Brentwood were to be married. The news relieved and at the same time chagrined him. He had suspected Kate of being in love with himself.

Brentwood confessed the same fear:—"I always thought it was Cortwright," he told her.

Kate's clear eyes never wavered. "Mr. Cortwright thinks of no one but himself," she answered. And after a moment:—"Poor little Lisa! Do you believe there would be any chance . . . he would let us take her?"

It was in regard to this Brentwood called on Cortwright.

"We're leaving for Italy, as soon as we can get things wound up. She's wonderful; but the trip may save a breakdown. Since you're closing up too, for a while

. . . we thought it just possible? It is partly her brother's feeling for the child that prompts the wish. . . ."

Cortwright stiffened. "I appreciate the interest," he said. "But—I've never had any desire to shift my responsibility. I'm already corresponding in regard to schools. . . ."

Lisa never knew of this offer; any more than she ever attached any personal application to Owen's startled exclamations just before his death. When Kate (they had been more like lovers than brother and sister), heartsick with longing for the things they would never talk of any more, asked:—

"And what had you been talking about?"

"We were talking about fairies. . . ." Lisa answered.

## CHAPTER VI

### MEN'S EYES AND A MIRROR NO BIGGER THAN A SCALLOPSHELL

CORTWRIGHT'S Paris success was beyond his hopes. "The Dewdrop," "The Wild Flower," "The Butterfly," won instantaneous and enthusiastic recognition. Flattering as had been their reception at home, Paris took them to her heart.

Society also opened its doors. Debonair, good-looking, gifted, the young American sculptor became quite the lion of the season. He had come for a flying visit. He stayed year after year. There was really nothing to take him back to San Miguel. The old group there was scattered. It may be he had felt more in regard to Kate Griffeth than he was willing to admit, even to himself.

As for Lisa, her present stage of length and legginess made her a negligible factor in his plans. Shortly after the Brentwoods' departure for Italy, the child had sickened. She was in bed six weeks; a low slow fever the village doctor found difficult to diagnose or deal with. When she got up again,—a shadowy, spindle-shanked, elongated metamorphosis of her former sprightliness, irritable and given to moods—Cortwright was glad enough to pack her off to school.

It was a good school he selected; one of the most

fashionable and exclusive on the Pacific Coast. It gave him genuine satisfaction to talk of her there. The story took. Up-to-date hostesses maneuvered for it:—"Such a romantic tale! Endangered his own life to snatch her from the waves. Nothing but a little gypsy girl. . . . And all the beauty that has come of it!"

Cortwright himself grew to cherish a sentimental regard for those early memories,—a regard Lisa by no means appeared to share.

"*Why didn't you let me tell about myself?*" she wrote angrily. "*How can things be nice for me here when you have told about me?*"

She had had her story all made up, poor child. It had lacked neither color nor ornamentation! As it happened, Cortwright received a substantial rebate through the sympathy excited by his version. . . .

"*And you should send my money when it is the right time. I always know if my money comes late. People are not so nice to me then. Because I know how to fight and take my own part, the other girls call me a Mexican Wildcat. But I think of things they do not. I spit in a girl's eye for calling me that! Would you like to have to write out ten irregular French verbs twenty times over? But I needn't stay here. I can go away. Any day I want I know how I can go away. I wish you would send me a gold locket and three silver bangles. Everybody says I dance best of all. Mexican Wildcat, indeed! I like that. Yes, thank you!*"

It really hurt Cortwright that Lisa showed so little appreciation. He was doing the right thing by her and intended to see it through.

Naturally, with time she adjusted herself to school life, just as in the old days she had adjusted herself to posing. She never made a brilliant record, except with her dancing. There she excelled. It was not long before a class of younger children was put in her charge.

"*I am happy to be able to report,*" Cortwright read with satisfaction, "*that Lisa has acquitted herself toward her new responsibility in a way that more than justifies the experiment. In her relations to her little class she is a changed creature. It is pretty to see how the children love her and would flock after her all day long. We feel more hopeful about her development than ever before. Next term, if she continues to do as well, we should consider it only fair to her generous patron that a still further reduction be made.*"

It was not so very long before Lisa was practically earning her own tuition. Philip continued to forward expenses for board, clothes, incidentals, a present now and then. She still had her restless moods, her clashes with authority, which he was occasionally called on to smooth over. Satisfied with the obvious, especially satisfied with the creditable part played by himself, he had not a suspicion of the thousand hidden desires,—pathetic, beautiful, shocking,—of the soul of the child turning to woman. Her letters, sometimes gay, sometimes rebellious, always entertaining, gave no hint of the beasts she grappled with;—envy, deceit, anger; of the angels she entertained.

Any young girl must have found the situation difficult. Lisa was proud, she was stubborn, she resented control. Above all, she longed to shine, to be praised and noticed!

Sensitive to beauty, responsive to kindness, her whole vibrant little personality athirst and athrill for pleasure, there was a tacit distinction made between her and her companions;—a distinction that cut like a whip. At this, the crucial, formative period of her life she burned under an angry sense of injustice, of daily snubs and humiliations. . . .

One afternoon a riding party had been planned to a nearby Mission. Lisa, having no saddle-horse allowance, was generally excluded from such excursions. On this particular occasion there happened to be an extra mount. Having received permission, palpitating with suppressed excitement, she dressed for the ride. Then at the last moment a stout and blowsy Kansas City girl, Emmie Schmidt, by name (of the house of Schmidt and Bamberger, packers) expressed a desire to go. Emmie kept no saddle-horse, either; but she could have kept three had she wanted them. Naturally, Lisa was informed she must wait till next time. . . .

"My word, but that girl has a temper! Pipe her face as she got down to let Emmie up?"

"Gypsy blood,—they say."

"There are gypsies camped over near the Arroyo Seco. I heard the gardener telling Miss Kinglake. . . ."

"We'll pass them this afternoon, then. . . ."

They did pass the gypsy encampment;—a ragged little brown tent or two, half hidden among the chaparral on the further slope of the arroyo. . . . Some browsing donkeys. . . . No other sign of life or animation;—till a stone thrown slyly from behind a clump of

bristling cactus nearly unseated the alarmed and indignant Emmie, and an instant eruption of shaggy grinning imps scuttled under the very feet of their horses begging for pennies. The riding-master scattered them with his whip. The young teacher, chaperoning the party, remarked she thought a complaint should be made. It wasn't safe to have such creatures stopping almost within school bounds.

"Light-fingered bunch, those Mexican gypsies," he agreed. "Make off with most anything,—barring a red-hot stove. Getting water from our irrigation-tank, too. Ought to be reported. . . ."

Late in arriving at the Mission, the party,—being delayed by Miss Schmidt's petulant inability to endure a trot and her terrified aversion to a canter,—took a short cut home, turning into the lane that ran back of the school farm.

"Who's that?" one of the girls exclaimed.

It was Lisa seated on the low stone wall that skirted the walnut grove. She was not alone. . . .

At the sound of the approaching cavalcade, the dark gracile figure of a young gypsy detached itself from the shadows, sprang catlike over the wall and vanished among the trees. . . .

"No earthly use to question her," Miss Kinglake, the principal, decided. "She has never proved herself truthful and would simply deny the whole thing. I'll telephone to Corona in the morning and have them moved on."

That night the hayricks burned. It was only a fortunate shift of wind that saved the stables. There could

be no question of the origin of the fire; one of the grooms having caught and wrestled with a gypsy youth, —a slim, dark fellow,—who twisted from his grip and escaped into the lane.

The worst feature of the case developed when old Queenie the watchful mastiff bitch, who should have given the alarm, was found shut up in a disused outhouse; and a faintly scented handkerchief, initialed L. C. (a surname having been decreed essential to the school records, Cortwright had good-naturedly permitted the use of his own), was picked up only a foot or two from the stable door. Further evidence in a bottle of scent on Lisa's dressing-table, similar to that used on the handkerchief, clinched matters. Adjustment was impossible. Lisa must go. . . .

Philip, shocked out of his complacency, cabled instructions that she be sent to San Miguel to stay with the old village couple he had left in charge of the studio. He himself would take passage on the first boat home. He was indignantly determined to call for a reckoning. The girl showed neither appreciation nor responsibility toward him. Why should he be further bothered with her? She must be set in the way to make her own living.

The pungent scent of the eucalyptus, the breezy ozone from the kelp-strewn shore, gave promise of a San Miguel that had suffered no sea change. . . . The post-office, where Cortwright stopped for his mail, occupied its familiar corner in the grocery-store;—bananas and hams on one side, a flyspecked case of poisonous-looking

cookies on the other. Philip was sure he remembered those cookies! But Progress is a jade hard to be denied. Bar your own stable against her;—ten to one she finds shelter in some neighbor's garage. . . . An auto-stage had succeeded the postman's striped umbrella and shaggy pony. You now read the morning's news the evening of the day it was printed. Back of what used to be the drug-store, a Japanese tea-garden invited with little round tables and a soda-fountain where one might drink root-beer. That was why it was called a "tea-garden," Philip supposed,—till he noticed the paper lanterns hanging above the tables. A few doors further along an artists' supply-shop had opened up and shut down again; one of poor Smalley's unsalable seascapes in the window.

Little short of a miracle, the way the fellow hung on! His was one of the few familiar faces in the group gathered to watch the stage draw up before the hoary old rambling-verandahed frame hotel. Philip waited for no greeting. Even the poulticing years of absence couldn't make him believe he was glad to see Smalley again. . . .

Along the gray road running up from the sea, the shadows were the shadows of the past; until, in front of Brentwood's bungalow, three girls and a weedy looking youth playing a set of tennis gave him the queer feeling that "nobody was home. . . ." At the postoffice they had told him the place was leased to a Mrs. Southwick, an art teacher from Los Angeles, who conducted summer classes there. The old Griffeth cottage was also occupied. Tea-things were set out on a table

among the cedars. Down the path a little girl in a blue dress came running, shrieking with a high, shrill, breathless insistence that could legitimately be expected only of a steam-calliope. Other little girls, also in blue, also shrieking, emptied themselves through the open door upon the porch,—shabby and paintless as ever. It gave Philip a sharp, unlooked-for stab to pass by. . . . The pull up the cliff in the old days had been broken here.

He never let himself go so far as to admit that he had been in love with Katheryn. Yet there was always the question,—what would it have meant had he allowed himself to love her? She had had the power to sway him, to dominate his emotions. She had even had the power to waken in him a disturbing sense of self-dissatisfaction. The girl radiated force;—a splendid truth and courage beyond that of other women. To Philip the memory of her was as the memory of a mountain path;—a path he had deliberately turned aside from as too steep, too adventurous. . . . Yet a path that might have led him . . . to the Heights!

An impatient shake of the shoulders. That was what it meant,—to come back. . . . An artist who tied himself up was a fool. Marriage implied impedimenta of one sort or another. . . .

He thought of Robert Martyn as he had met him in New York,—played-out, disillusionized,—already a "has-been," so far as any real artistic achievement was concerned. It had been an actual shock to Philip to meet Martyn again. . . . There couldn't be more than a few years' difference in their ages; at least, that was

what he used to suppose. . . . He wouldn't like anybody to suggest it now! They had lunched together,—mutually ignoring past misunderstandings,—spent an agreeable half hour smoking and talking over old times. But in Robert there was no spring left, no glint of keenness,—till he spoke of Michael:—

Would Philip come that evening to hear Michael play? The boy had returned from Germany,—was making something of a name for himself. Poor Martyn produced press-notices from his pocketbook. . . . Once started on that theme he could have gone on interminably. But Philip had other engagements. . . .

Where a jutting ledge of rock shelved to a flight of rickety wooden steps leading down to the sands he paused. . . . It was at the foot of these steps he had said his real good-bye to Katheryn Griffeth. . . . It was up these steps,—on an afternoon very like the present,—he had first carried Lisa;—drenched, clutching, pathetic, a half-drowned, homeless kitten, wrapped in his old gray sweater. There was bad blood in the girl! All he had done for her since. . . . An angry determination to make her understand she had had her chance,—that he would no longer be responsible for her vagaries, hurried him on to the studio.

He found the old woman alone, much flustered at his unexpected arrival. Her husband was fishing at the cove. Miss Lisa . . . ? An expressive shrug. How should she know? Off in the morning,—wandering all day like a wild thing along the shore. . . .

There was an evident tendency toward complaint that Cortwright ignored. She was not an attractive old

woman. She screwed her hair back from her face; and would have liked to screw right through you with her sharp little eyes.

Philip was hot, tired, vaguely disappointed; though in what respect he could not have said. He would change to his bathing things and go for a swim.

A natural athlete, Cortwright excelled in all outdoor sports.

This evening the sea was choppy,—a multitude of white-crested wavelets hurrying and leaping toward the shore. Philip swam out beyond the rocks and found himself in a smoother area. The warm lapping water, the perfect sense of freedom, of oneness with the elements, lured him on. Delicate tints of green, of mauve, of citrine,—faint afterglow of sunset,—reflected from sky to sea. . . .

Head up, with sure vigorous strokes, Philip followed the flight of a small black gull; one of the species the fishermen along that coast call "hell-divers" and kill, when they get the chance, as fish-robbers.

Suddenly the bird poised; wheeled on slanting wing; and dived. . . .

For the first time Philip saw he was not alone. Low in the water, still some distance ahead of him, floated a girl. Quite at her ease she rested there, her hands clasped beneath her throat,—so much a part of the cradling sea that but a moment before his glance had passed over her,—mistaking her half-submerged body for a mass of drifting kelp.

Now, as the bird plunged, she turned. Bare arms

flashing, swift and sudden as a fish, she shot past Cortwright. . . . Girl and gull were racing for the shore.

Not a sign betrayed her consciousness of him;—till a mischievous ricochet of rosy heels splashed a blinding cascade full in his face!

He rubbed the water out of his eyes just in time to catch her laughing back at him over her shoulder. . . .

The challenge was not to be ignored. Philip put after her. The gull, startled from its low skimming flight, took wing. . . .

It now became a race between the man and the girl. He was no swifter than she; but he was stronger.

The roughening sea as they neared the rocks retarded her. She lost something of her ease of motion, struggling and battling,—looking back apprehensively. . . .

A moment more and he would have her!

She dived,—disappearing within a huge curling breaker. . . .

Philip, recovering from the lunging snatch he had made, stood alone,—waist deep amid a swirl of retreating waters. . . .

Panting, dripping, triumphant, full length on the flat-topped rock to which she had crawled, the girl laughed down at him. . . .

It was Lisa!

Why his heart should have taken a sudden leap like a sportive porpoise, Philip didn't know. . . . He waited a moment to make sure nothing very remarkable had happened. Then:—

"You win," he admitted cheerfully. "Get down off that. There's a big wave coming. . . ."

Instantly she slid to the wet sands:—

"I'm tired. That was some race," she said.

Her boy's black bathing-suit emphasized the gleaming ivory-tint of her slim young limbs. She put up her hands to her cap,—releasing a wonderful mass of dark hair. . . . It fell cloudlike about her. She shook her head,—laughing, sprinkling Cortwright with a shower of silvery drops. . . .

He caught his breath sharply between his teeth. . . .

The Christmas preceding Lisa had sent him her photograph:—in school uniform, severe black and white, with demurely plaited braids. The schoolgirl scrawl across the back of it assured him she was "Very gratefully his. . . ." It was what they had told her to say. He had been pleased, gratified. It was all extremely creditable; and he had taken pleasure in showing the picture about. Yet it had hardly prepared him for this afternoon!

"I'm sorry you frightened Sylvestre," was what he heard her saying. "Perhaps he will never come back any more. . . ."

"Sylvestre?"

"My pet gull. . . . Some Portuguese boys at the Cove caught him on their line. They were going to kill him. They are very cruel. . . . I made them give him to me. His wing was broken and I kept him in my cave till he could fly again. When I go swimming, he watches for me,—and we play together. Perhaps he won't come back,—now that you have frightened him. . . ."

"Do you know to whom you are talking?" a sudden suspicion prompted Philip to ask.

She began to study him then with dark mysterious eyes. . . .

"Why! . . . It's Mr. Cortwright. . . ."

In exchange for her photograph Philip had sent her a sketch of himself, taken by a young friend of his, a Parisian cartoonist, at work in his smock. Naturally, he looked different in a bathing-suit; nor had he thought it necessary to notify her of the exact date of his return. Recognition came slowly, and with it a sort of defiant doubt. . . .

"Lisa, if you didn't know me, why were you so ready to race with me?" He tried to keep the amused irritation out of his voice. "Didn't they teach you any better than that at school?"

"I hated them at school!" she answered with an angry flash; and lapsed into silence looking down at her bare toes.

Now that she realized it was Cortwright she was waiting for him to scold her. The one curt message he had sent had left no doubt as to the mood she might expect. . . .

But he did not scold. . . . "Hey ho! It's good to be home! There's no place like San Miguel after all . . ." he said. "It's the sea-bathing I've missed. We'll swim every day. And you'll pose for me again, Lisa. I feel ten years younger already,—I wonder how I ever kept away so long. . . ."

By this time, splashing along through the surf, they had come to the rocky corner that screened the strip of beach in front of Lisa's cave. She waved him back:—

"You mustn't come. This is where I change. . . ."

"But, child,—that's hardly safe. . . ." His glance took in the rugged bend of coast,—the wild swirl of mounting waters. "It would be the easiest thing in the world for you to get cut off here. . . . Hurry! there's no time to waste. . . . When you hear me whistle. . . ."

Lisa had already disappeared within the cave. Half-dressed, on her knees, she was looking at herself in a tiny round mirror,—no bigger than a scallopshell:—"I'm pretty! I'm *very* pretty!" she whispered. "I can see it in their eyes,—more even than in this mirror. . . . Sylvestre will do anything I tell him. Mr. Livsey" (the riding-master at school) "wrote a note and tucked it in my saddle. Manuel fought the other boys,—to get my gull. . . ." She powdered her nose,—and looked again, nodding her head. "Ah *ha!* He intended to scold,—and he didn't do it. . . . I'll have to pose. But anything I want,—I can get. . . . If I manage right. . . ."

Cortwright whistled. She sprang up and ran out to him.

## CHAPTER VII

### HOW MAMÁ SOLEDAD SENT WORD FOR LISA TO COME—BUT IT WASN'T POSSIBLE

LISA would not let Cortwright send away the old couple.

"I don't like Mrs. Semple and Mrs. Semple doesn't like me. But she's better than nobody,—till we can get a proper servant," she said.

"We don't need any servant. There isn't room for one."

"If I am to keep house for you, I must do it my own way." She was at the little round breakfast-table in the great sea window, pouring his coffee. That was another of her innovations, that they should breakfast together in the studio looking out across the sea—"The thing to do is to buy a car and build a garage. . . . You can have your servant's room there. When we are not working, we want to enjoy ourselves. One can't enjoy oneself if there are always dishes to be washed!"

He laughed, amused; but did not speak at once. Perhaps because at that moment he was watching how the frill of lace dressing-jacket fell away from the smooth young arm, and the golden skin of the orange she was peeling for him curled back about the ivory tinted contour of slim wrist. One of the first things Lisa had told him was that she needed:—"Oh, a *great* many

things!" Evidently, a lace dressing-jacket had been one of them. . . .

By the time Cortwright recollected himself to remark he didn't consider a garage any more necessary than a servant, it was too late. Lisa had run for pencil and writing-tablet; and they spent the rest of the morning making plans.

The builders once at work, it was easily demonstrated how Lisa's own little room might be enlarged. "It was no bigger than a birdcage!" She wanted a sleeping-porch,—and a closet where "one could really hang things. . . ."

What with the new car, their building projects, their regular studio hours, and scarcely less regular afternoon swim, June and July slipped past, August was upon them before they knew; and Cortwright had occasion, hurrying in one evening, to turn on Lisa—holding out the newspaper:—"By Heaven! But I *am* a lucky chap!"

Such was his announcement of the first war news. The German invasion of France was on. Many Americans had been caught by it. . . . He had gotten out just in the nick of time. . . .

Again and again, during the early days of that tense autumn, Philip congratulated himself.

"But—haven't you any friends over there you are anxious about?"

It was a September afternoon. He and Lisa were sitting together on a rock after their swim, dabbling their toes in the water, amusing themselves with the bellicose antics of a couple of crabs.

"My dear child, I can't afford to worry over other people's troubles. It would be bad for my work. Besides, this won't be the first time the Germans have taken Paris. . . ."

To Lisa it was all impersonal enough:—"Look! look!" Eyes shining with excitement, she leant far over the rocky pool:—"The big one has the little one by the leg. . . . Oh,—he's eating him up!"

In the shifting fortunes of the crab battle the incipient discussion was forgotten. Cortwright's attitude, after all, reflected that of a good many Americans at that time. . . . It was Europe's quarrel. . . . Always insatiable for work, he found this new Lisa even more stimulating, more dramatically suggestive, than had been the rebellious little dancer of long ago. Again he thrilled to feel himself at a crucial point in his career;—her beauty, his genius. . . . "Child, child, do you realize what you are helping me to create?"

"I realize I shall be very glad when this pose is finished," she assured him practically.

The pose *was* a difficult one. Philip was merciless as ever in that respect. His method of domination had experienced no essential change. Simply, the bribes were on a larger scale:—

"When we do finish," he promised now, "I'll take you up to Los Angeles. We'll have a regular celebration!"

Lisa had never been to Los Angeles; though at school the other girls were always talking of the shops there,—the theatres, the hotels. . . .

Absorbed as they were, busy every moment with work or play, the two kept very much to themselves. Philip

no longer had the feeling that he cared to identify himself with the local coterie. Smalley, the only one of the old group left, he had always detested. When the little man called, full of reminiscences, an over-emphasized claim to past intimacy, Philip sat on him relentlessly.

Lisa proved equally aloof. With her it was really a deep-rooted shyness, a sensitive dread of snubs, implanted by her unfortunate school experience.

"Will somebody please be so kind as to explain that girl," one of Mrs. Southwick's art students demanded innocently enough. "I've puzzled and puzzled; but it's beyond me to make her out. She dresses better than any of us. He takes her everywhere in that new car. . . . And yet? . . . Is she just his model?—or what?"

"She's *what*, I expect," answered Smalley, by no means innocently. He probably believed it. Anyway, Philip had been nasty to him; and Smalley was not the man to ignore that kind of debt.

Lisa may have felt her position to be equivocal. At least, she made no advances. Her only companions, apart from Cortwright, were the O'Leary children.

The O'Learys were the new tenants of the old Griffeth cottage. Both father and mother were artists; and there were seven little girls. The whole family seemed to get on all the better for not being too well off. There was a gaiety, an insouciant enthusiasm, about everything they did, which came, Mrs. O'Leary explained, from "never feeling tied down. . . ."

Apparently, they did not know what it was to sit down to any regular meals:—

"Come! Come quick!" the little girls would cry, streaming out after Lisa like a flock of twittering bluebirds. . . . Their eyes were the same hue as their one-piece frocks,—which seemed always cut from the same material, after the same pattern, a little shorter or longer as the case required:—"Father has baked an omelet!"

Perhaps this was at two o'clock in the afternoon. Everybody would collide into everybody else, uproariously happy, uproariously hungry,—having eaten nothing but "cookies" since the night before. . . .

Mr. O'Leary, shaking the hair out of his eyes like an excitable little terrier, flourished the omelet:—"By cats! he had forgotten the salt!" The salt would be passed in a clamshell. . . .

It came to be, Lisa could not pass the house but the bluebirds were after her. She taught them to dance; and one night, when the moon hung like a white flower over the cliff, they dressed themselves in garlands of leaves and eucalyptus-pods and held dryads' festival among the cedars.

"My dear, you're just a wonder!" Mrs. O'Leary exclaimed in her exaggerated Irish way. "I'm surprised you don't take it up professionally,—with all this new dancing coming in. It's not so hard to get started on the Pacific Coast. Almost any manager would be glad to give you an opening, just for your form alone;—if you hadn't a tenth the talent you've got. Posing for the figure is . . . all right enough, of course. . . . But there isn't any future to it. . . . And then. . . ."

"I didn't use to like posing," Lisa admitted. "I've

grown accustomed to it, I suppose. Mr. Cortwright says it's as creative as any other form of art. . . . I don't really believe he would let me go. . . ." The old child's idea was deeply implanted. Philip was still to Lisa the natural arbiter of her destinies:—"And he gives me,—such pretty things!"

"She seems as innocent about it all as our little Nora could be," Mrs. O'Leary referred the matter to her husband. "I can't hardly believe things have gone as far as they say. . . ."

The mouthpiece of "they" in this instance was Mrs. Southwick. She was a well-tailored woman, large, complacent,—with a sound sense of commercial values. As "an art-teacher" her position of moral ostracism was positive. The O'Learys were newcomers and simple enough to be impressed.

"She's all right yet, I expect," O'Leary balanced the question. "Though I wouldn't wish to see one of ours in her shoes. Cortwright may marry her. That's not my bet. . . ." He puffed his cheeks,—swelled out his little chest. . . . "A man like that. . . . By cats! It's hands off, of course. . . . But you've got to keep your eyes open. . . . Can't be too careful. Mother of seven girls!"

It had come very gradually to Philip,—the knowledge that he must have Lisa. To do him justice he had struggled against it;—fought it as he had never before fought anything. He was far from being a libertine. Up to the present, women had played a very small part in his life. He had come nearer caring for Katheryn

Griffeth than anybody. But this only made things worse. When a man over forty falls violently (and most unexpectedly to himself) in love with a girl not yet half his age, it is apt to go hard with him. The unaccountable depressions and exultations, the fluctuations and revulsions of a first genuine passion were wearing down Cortwright's resistance. It was not only his work that suffered. He could not sleep; he could not rest. . . . Like the man in the parable who had kept his house swept and garnished,—once the devil did break in one would have thought there were seven of him.

Lisa herself appeared quite untouched by the fire she had kindled. She had played for power,—and won! If she was conscious of a secret sense of triumph, there was no outward sign of it. If she was sometimes a little frightened, she did not show that either. What she had wanted was pretty dresses, luxury, ease. She had set herself to get them with a primitive simplicity that amounted almost to innocence. To make Philip fall in love with her had been half an instinct, half a mischievous idea. She had experimented with it with a light-hearted daring and gaiety that acted on him like a heady wine. . . .

And there was no escape for him. Day after day he breathed in her beauty, till its aroma had come to seem to him like the fragrance of a too sweet flower,—drugging his senses, poisoning his blood. Things couldn't much longer go on as they were. After all, he had been good to her. What would her life be without his pro-

tection? . . . It had always seemed natural to Philip that he should have the thing he wanted. . . .

More than once recently he had tried to make Lisa understand what he felt. But she glanced away from his suggestions untouched. . . . That was what made her power,—the tantalizing, illusive brightness of her, —only half tamed, like Sylvestre, the black-winged gull. . . .

One afternoon, when they had been working in the studio later than usual, Cortwright came to Lisa to adjust her position. A word would have been enough. She was wonderfully responsive to suggestion and hated to be touched.

Cortwright took her hand to move it a little,—the pose required it lifted and arched above her head. When he had corrected her attitude, he did not at once remove his hand; but let it run caressingly the length of her slender arm and rest for a moment trembling against her breast:—

"Lisa," he whispered. "Lisa! don't you care at all about making me happy? Oh, Lisa,—you must know what I feel. . . ."

She sprang from him, angry, terrified. . . . "If you touch me . . ." her voice was like the hiss of a snake. . . . "If you come near me. . . ." For still he advanced with outstretched imploring arms:—"I'll scream, —I'll call Yoshan," the soft-treading Japanese who occupied the new servant's quarters in the garage. . . .

With a tremendous effort Cortwright controlled himself.

"Go and dress," he said. "We'll work no more to-day.

You're foolish. There's nothing to be frightened about. Do you think that I would hurt you?"

For nearly a week after that Lisa avoided the studio. Off, almost with sunrise, she did not return till well after dark, when she retired at once to her room. . . .

Philip had the tact to ignore her absence,—treating it as nothing more than one of those periodic fits of restlessness he had always had to contend with. Indeed, he himself was glad of a respite. It gave him a chance to get hold of his nerves,—to readjust his sense of values. . . .

Busying himself in mechanical duties about the studio he began to experience anew that intolerable fret of the creative faculty checked in mid-career. With one of those swift transitions familiar to all imaginative workers he now assured himself, whatever else Lisa might be, she was for him the model of models! The fevers and frustrations of the past few weeks he looked back on with a sense of irritated resentment. . . . Before anything else he must win back her startled confidence and finish his statue. . . .

Lisa had run out of Cortwright's studio determined she would never enter it again. . . . Never . . . never! So *that* was the sort of thing people were saying! For a long time she had known they were talking about her. When she had believed it was only Mrs. Southwick's pupils, she told herself she did not care. Mixed with a very genuine envy of these girls, who played tennis and called to one another by their first names, she felt an equally genuine touch of contempt. She despised them for despising her posing. . . . Snobs!

snobs! snobs!—like those other girls who had made her so unhappy at school.

Now, in her bewildered inexperience, for the first time it flashed over her just *what* was the sort of thing people did think and say. . . . Even the O'Learys had not remained untouched by it.

After one or two well-meant attempts at warning, met by a seemingly persistent evasion (the habit of "confidences" was something entirely foreign to Lisa), there had been a gradual withdrawal. . . . The bluebirds no longer flocked out after her as she passed on her way to the beach. Once or twice, meeting Mrs. O'Leary in the village, the elder woman did not stop to speak. Her smile was uncomfortable, rather than unfriendly. . . . Lisa's resentment flared at the memory of it:—

"She thinks I'm not good enough to speak to," was her interpretation. "Oh, there are some people so good . . . they aren't willing to give anybody else a chance!"

The storm in her soul drove her along the shore. . . . That first day she must have covered twenty miles. . . . In the wild delight of feeling herself free again (for the first time since Philip's return from France!) she raced with the winds, she shrieked at the gulls, startling them to white flight over the flashing whiteness of the breakers. . . . It was as if she herself had wings. . . . When she grew tired of running, she dropped down among the sand-dunes. For hours she lay there, conscious only of the sky, the sea, the sun. . . . The dark cloud that all through the night seemed as if it must smother her, had lifted from her spirit. . . . Mr. Cort-

wright had made things uncomfortable. . . . Very well! Two could play at that game. . . . He could finish his statue without her. He should *never* finish it!

But as the days passed and Philip showed no consciousness of her defection, busying himself about his own affairs quite as if nothing had happened, Lisa began to lose confidence. After all, her work in the studio was a part of the very structure of her existence. If she did not pose for Cortwright,—what else was there she could do?

The fourth morning of her self-imposed banishment was a morning of mist and chill. . . . The restless phase had exhausted itself. She no longer wished to wander. . . . There would be a fire in the studio. When Mr. Cortwright finished his work, he would ring for tea. Lisa pictured herself seated opposite him in lazy ease before the driftwood blaze. Later, perhaps, he would play his flute. . . . Whatever the changing details, the tableau conjured was one of sensuous satisfaction, of intimate comfort and companionship.

Huddled in the mouth of the cave, the gray mist shut her in. Try as she would she could not keep from shivering. . . . The softness and luxury of her life as model had done much to undermine the hardy endurance of her open-air childhood. . . . And before that time with the gypsies there had been another time . . . of brightness . . . of warmth.

Lisa's memories of it flashed and died,—fitful, unsubstantial, as little to be recorded as the memories of dreams. What came to-day was gone to-morrow. There was nothing she could put into words except

the one picture:—a little rocking boat, tossed amid a welter of black winds and surging waves. . . . Her mother's face,—her mother's arms. . . . Terror and engulfing night. . . .

Oh, if there was only someone to whom she could turn! Never had she needed friendship as she needed it now. . . . Having drifted so long,—in the face of a crisis she found herself incapable of definite decision.

Often enough in the old days had Lisa had her fits of dissatisfaction,—the secret whisper of the blood that pricked against restraint. . . . Always before, these moods had found relief in some flashing vision of future happiness and emancipation. Now this morning, her chilled heart felt no stir of hope. . . . She wanted to be happy! She wanted to be happy so much! Yet to struggle was useless. Some unknown force, it seemed to her, had thrown her life into Philip's hands. . . . Twenty dollars was what he had paid Mamá Soledad. . . .

Down went Lisa's face in her arms. She was as helpless then as she felt herself now. . . . Philip had always had a cruel advantage. . . .

"*Hola!*"

Lisa started to her feet with a little cry of terror.

Round the ragged bend of coast, like an apparition out of the mist, drenched, clutching, scrambling among the slippery rocks, leapt a wild shock-headed figure. . . .

"Sylvestre!" It was so long since she had seen any of the gypsies, she had to pull herself together,—dismiss a bewildered sense of unreality that was half com-

posed of distaste. . . . "I thought the tide was up. . . . How did you make it?"

He spluttered, shaking the water from eyes and hair as a shaggy dog might have done:—

"Takes more than a wave to knock me out! Here I am, you see. . . . We're alone, sister?" He shot a dark glance of watchful caution toward the cave.

"Yes;—the children don't come any more. No one else can,—now the tide is up. . . . It's a long time since I've seen you, Sylvestre!"

"That's true." He threw himself down in the shelter of the rocky arch at her feet. From the cliffs above the strip of beach would now appear deserted. "These parts were hardly healthful to me after. . . ."

"Sylvestre, I never meant the barns should burn,—on account of the horses. The hay was different. . . ."

"Who's to stop the winds from blowing, sister?" He looked up at her in silence, his restless, glittering eyes searching her face.

Lisa's own glance dropped. She turned away her head and began to play with the sand, sifting it through her fingers. . . . Only the moment before she had been longing, terribly, for a friend. Now, the old pride reasserted itself. . . . This ragged unkempt fellow!

When she looked again Sylvestre had his knife out. He tossed and caught it with apparent carelessness, making the blade glance in the sun:—

"A good knife, sister. Many a squirrel, thinking himself safe hid among the branches has it pinned through the heart. . . . Christ's blood! That's a fine ring on your finger. Fine rings don't always mean

happiness. . . . A man might think himself safe as a squirrel. . . ."

"No! no, Sylvestre. . . . I'm happy,—truly!"

Before either could speak again a great wave surging in broke almost at their feet. . . . The strip of beach was submerged;—the cold gray water crawling and splashing to the cave's mouth.

"The devil! That was a big one. . . . Do they get much higher?"

"They're not apt to. . . . Sylvestre,—I've been so cold! There's driftwood in that corner,—and I have nuts. . . ."

Not only as certain birds are supposed to do had Lisa decorated her nest; like the muskrat she had her hidden store.

From a cranny in the rocks she took a box;—got out sweet chocolate, almonds. . . .

A fire and a comrade make all the difference in the world!

Though the gray mist still hung like a curtain in the arch of the cavern, the crackle and sparkle of red flame, the drifting feather of smoke, transformed the place.

Sylvestre grinned, cracking the almond shells with his strong white teeth. Lisa, curled close as a kitten to the warmth, nibbled chocolate. . . . It was always that way. Her first feeling of shocked recoil on any sudden reappearance of the gypsies soon vanished. In a little while she was quite one of them,—listening, laughing, talking their talk. . . .

While they were eating a whistle sounded from the cliff above.

"What's that?"

Lisa smiled, shaking her head;—though she divined at once that Cortwright, noting the mounting tide from his window, had hurried down to find out if she were cut off in the cave. . . . *Aha!* He wasn't then as indifferent as he intended her to believe. . . .

When they finished eating, Sylvestre rolled a cigarette and sprawled at Lisa's feet looking up at her.

How was Mamá Soledad?

Not well. . . . That was why Sylvestre had come. "*La Vieja*" (they spoke part in Mexican, part in the gypsy tongue, Lisa supplying a word now and then in English), had had a stroke of some sort,—it had left her blind, very restless and feeble. She probably would not live the summer out. And she wanted to see Lisa. It was of that she spoke always,—calling for "*la niñita*. . . ." "There's something she wants to tell you," Sylvestre said. "It darkens her mind and lies heavy on her heart,—holding her back after she has been called. . . ."

"Where is she, Sylvestre?"

"On the Island, to be sure. . . ."

"But—what can I do?"

"*Hermana*, the way is free,—except to caged birds. . . ."

"How long does it take to get to the Island?"

"Two days down the coast on foot. . . . One day for the boat,—if the winds are right. . . ."

"How could I go, then?"

Sylvestre looked at her. . . . The white serge skirt, the white shoes, the gay little silk sweater that had not

been warm enough. . . . He lifted his shoulders,—spat,—threw away the butt of his cigarette. . . .

"They call us vagrants, sister. Because we would be free they clap us into jail. There's nothing too bad, it seems, for a *gitano* to do. . . . We lie, sometimes. Pick up that which don't belong to us,—when there's nobody looking. It's even said we'd stick a man in the back;—which all depends on the circumstances. But there's one thing a Romano doesn't do. . . . And that is, to go back on his tribe, or those who have been good to him. . . ."

"She sold me,—when I was a little girl. . . ."

"God's Mother! That was to get twenty dollars. . . . Didn't she send me back after you? And you wouldn't come?"

"Sylvestre, I never did believe I'm a gypsy. There are things. . . ."

Sylvestre must have remembered the storm that swept Lisa to the Island. He was several years her senior. What was vague and dim to her, must, naturally, be clear enough to him. Yet he would never speak of it,—never admit that he recollected.

She put out her hand, touched his knee,—with something almost of pleading:—

"Sylvestre. . . . You know that time. . . . The fire . . . and the faces. . . ."

His own face remained blank. The one science all gypsies master is the science of keeping a secret.

"Very well. But you can see for yourself I can't go. It simply isn't possible. . . ."

Her eyes dropped to her hands. Slowly she drew

from her finger the emerald ring Sylvestre had commented on. It was Philip's last gift:—

"Here,—take this ring. It's worth much more than the twenty dollars she sold me for. You can sell it and buy things to make her comfortable. . . . Be sure and don't gamble away the money. . . ."

Sylvestre laughed, pocketing the ring. Money was always good; though it wasn't money he'd been sent after. . . .

They talked then of the other gypsies. What news of Morella Demetrio and Secundio Silva? Morella, it seemed, was love-sick for Secundio,—who would have none of her. But Sylvestre believed she'd get him in the end. Ay,—she was a dark one! He wouldn't want her after him. . . .

"Is she pretty?" Lisa asked.

Sylvestre rolled a cigarette. "Pretty enough,—when there wasn't anybody else round. . . ." His glance said no one would look at Morella if Lisa were near.

Altogether the visit did Lisa good. It wasn't possible she should go back to the gypsies, of course. Mamá Soledad's message might be nothing but a ruse. . . . But Sylvestre's eyes had told her all over again how pretty she was. Mr. Cortwright was only pretending he could get on without her. . . . Let people talk! On an excited little rush the sense of her own power returned.

Next morning she walked into the studio quite as if nothing had happened. Without explanation on either side the interrupted pose was resumed. . . .

## CHAPTER VIII

### TO THE BIRTH OF A STAR

CHRISTMAS had come and gone before the new figure was finished; a lovely thing,—Lisa on tip-toe, her hair blowing cloudlike about her, holding high above her head a star. . . .

Never had Cortwright been so exacting, so difficult to satisfy. There was no more love-making. For the time being, Lisa existed for him only in relation to his art. He was irritable, impatient. Some days exultant, full of enthusiasm and ardor; other days utterly depressed. . . . Outside, the sea mists continued. A prolonged stretch of gloomy weather seemed to cut them off from the rest of the world. . . .

It was the lifted arm that bothered Philip. He modeled and remodeled. . . . Took new measurements. . . . Nagged at Lisa;—who, whatever her thoughts, held stoically to the pose with what at times seemed to him almost a touch of hidden mockery.

At last one day Cortwright's frayed nerves snapped:

"Why can't you suggest something?" he flung at her. . . . "You are not an automaton."

"It isn't the arm at all," she told him. Then, "Look!"

An almost imperceptible upward tilt of the head produced the effect for which he had been striving. . . .

From that moment the strain, the secret attitude of

antagonism, relaxed. . . . They worked together like comrades. Though both were quite worn out by the time their work was done, it had brought them closer together. And the result justified the pains. Philip's triumph knew no bounds. He praised Lisa, his own accomplishment;—was lavish of all sorts of commendation and prognostications of success. . . . As the finished figure was to be in bronze, he was now obliged to go up to Los Angeles to make arrangements for the casting. To Lisa's wordless but intense satisfaction, it appeared he had not forgotten his promise. She was to accompany him! A friend of his, who was spending the winter East, had offered the use of his apartment at any time. . . . They would go in the car and take Yoshan. Philip had never liked driving.

Impossible to imagine Lisa's anticipations, as silent, beautiful, alert, she preened herself for her first flight. After nearly a month of unbroken fog, the sun shone forth again. It was under the happiest auspices they set out. . . .

They shopped together. They explored the city. It was all carnival to Lisa;—the crowds, the gaily decorated show-windows, the open-air flower stands . . . pigeons, a brass band in the park. . . . Above everything, the lighted streets at night! Yet for all her young enthusiasm, her vibrating response to new and untried pleasures, it gratified Philip to see that the girl never lost poise. There was a distinctive quality of voice and carriage. If she knew when people turned to look after her, you would not have guessed that she knew.

Among other discoveries, it appeared Lisa had never been to the theatre. No,—never! The other girls at school had gone, of course; and Lisa, . . . once . . . almost. . . . As a fitting initiation, Philip decided on a box-party at the Alhambra; where by good luck Rose Kelly happened to be booked. He told Lisa he had invited a few of his friends to join them;—"just three or four really worth while fellows," she would be interested to meet. After the play they were to go on to supper at the Victoria.

For this occasion he himself selected Lisa's frock;—a black tissue shot through with silver. She was to dress her hair low; her only ornament a slender platinum crescent set with diamonds,—Cortwright had grown lavish in his gifts. This she was to wear on a black velvet bandeau on her forehead. The very severity of it all made her appear the more virginally young and appealing.

That evening was Revelation to Lisa. It was as if some magic juice "on sleeping eyelids laid" had opened her vision to a new world. Cortwright had never before introduced any of his friends. The four men included in the party were, as he had promised, really worth while. There was Raycroft, the New York dramatic critic; and Snyder, the London architect, whom Philip had first known in Paris. Snyder was a man probably sixty-two or three years old, distinguished in his profession. The war had caught him in Los Angeles. His family had written him not to try to come back;—"there was nothing he could do." Realizing the reasonableness of their attitude, he acquiesced in it; yet any-

one could see how he chafed and fretted at enforced exile at such a time. The other two were younger; Francis Fitzgerald, "the new Irish poet"; and Sam Simington, also extremely "new," whose weird bar-room and dance-hall "futurist impressions," everybody was talking about, and no one seemed to have courage to buy. Simington confessed himself at the end of his tether. He was wondering if it would pay him to run down to San Miguel awhile and "paint fish. . . ."

Because it had been agreed the party should meet in the theatre, and because everybody timed themselves by the rising of the curtain, introductions were of the briefest. Lisa had little attention for her companions. Delighted by the abrupt transition from the early winter darkness to an atmosphere of color, of glow, of,—to her,—almost bewildering novelty, she settled herself to watch the late arrivals, the women with their gay evening wraps—the hurrying ushers. . . .

With the last strains of the overture, the mysterious darkening of the hushed house, she shivered. For no reason she could explain, tears had started in her eyes. A low-voiced remark of one of the men in the box behind her carried no meaning. . . . For her head was dizzy as with the ringing of a multitude of little golden bells. Thrills kept running up and down her spine,—pricking at her toes and fingers. Suddenly, out of the cloud-dim past, a Sun had risen! Whatever it was she remembered, whatever it was she divined, on a little sigh Lisa's spirit took wings;—fluttered down like a homing bird over the footlights to Fairyland. . . .

It happened the piece was a romantic comedy, such

as Rose Kelly excelled in;—brilliantly Oriental in theme and setting. The plot dealt with the theft of an incredible diamond, the star jewel in the crown of a powerful Arabian prince. A beautiful dance girl, accused, flees the palace, and joins herself to a fierce tribe of desert robbers. The heir to the crown follows; intent not only on recovering the lost jewel, but also the runaway maiden. His identity discovered, he is made captive. The girl frees him. Together they escape. Returning to the palace the pair are again apprehended and sentenced to death as traitors. The culminating scene in the starlit prison-court, the night set for their execution, reached a dramatic climax,—where the girl begs to be allowed to dance for the last time before her lover. The request is granted and at the end of the dance she lays at his feet the lost jewel, which, it appears, she had followed the robbers into the desert to regain. . . .

As the curtain shot down and the lights shot up Lisa sat on, bright-eyed, rapt, intent. It was all too intimate, too vital, for her to think of taking any part in the applause.

"Come!" laughed Philip behind her. "Wake up! We are going on to supper. . . ."

All through supper at the hotel, the glamour lasted. It may have been this that saved her from any sense of shyness. And the men did their best to bring her out. Unaffected admirers of Cortwright's work, they were intrigued to meet the beautiful young model, so intimately and romantically connected with it. Perhaps even, there seemed to them something rather touching

in the shining, credulous joy of her. . . . The young Irishman in particular could hardly take his eyes from her face.

Cortwright was in high feather. He excelled in the rôle of host,—always at his best, his most magnetic. The evening was a success. There could be no question of the impression Lisa was making. He patted himself on the back for it. . . . Now and then he, too, would sit back looking at her. . . .

"By Gad! Remarkable the way Miss Kelly hangs on. . . ." It was Raycroft who spoke:—"Sixty,—if she's a day. . . ."

"*Please!*"

At this there was a general laugh.

"It is then actually your first experience of the theatre?" He pursued the point with amused interest.

"I—don't know. . . ." The ambiguity of the words was less even than that of her strangely brightening look. . . .

"But it was perfect? All quite perfect?" Snyder smiled across at her. He supposed she had not understood Raycroft's question.

She shook herself out of her vagueness, then. The blue fire of the diamonds on her forehead flamed;—

"To dance! Oh,—to dance like that! It ended too soon. . . . What was a jewel to give back? *I* could have danced a star down out of the sky. . . !"

"And if they told me I had but the one night to live," cried Fitzgerald, all the Celt in him catching fire at her fire,—"and gave me but the one wish. . . ."

Lisa's laugh rang out. He admired her! They all

admired her! It was the triumph of which she had dreamed. . . . "But funerals are so expensive. . . ." She sparkled. She glowed. Suddenly she raised her arms. Her sleeves slashed and falling away at the shoulders gave beautifully the impression of black wings. "You think that something to die for? To see a star danced down?"

There were others dancing. Before they realized her intention she had risen and was drifting away from them.

People at nearby tables turned. The orchestra swung into a new strain. Gradually the other dancers dropped out. . . .

With young delight that marveled at its own daring Lisa swept on. The nods and smiles, the ripples of applause, the music that seemed to play for her alone, produced their own form of intoxication.

She was thinking:—"If the girls who used to snub me could see me now!"

She was thinking:—"I'm dancing as Rose Kelly couldn't dance. She's sixty,—and the men knew it. I'm not twenty yet,—and I'm beautiful! I'm beautiful! . . ."

Head thrown back, arms aloft, she circled slowly down one row of tables and up the other side. Then whirled in swift and lovely grace . . . sprang . . . appeared to snatch at something . . . and sank laughing into her place.

For a moment, silence. Till the young Irishman leapt on his chair, raised high his glass:—

"To the birth of a star!" he toasted her. . . .

After that came the applause,—laughing, clapping, the waving of handkerchiefs. . . .

Was Mr. Cortwright angry? Lisa, bewildered,—half frightened now,—stole a look at his face.

"You must rise," he whispered. "You must bow and smile at them. Don't try to say anything."

Leaving the dining-room that night on Cortwright's arm it seemed to Lisa she was walking into a new world under a triumphal arch. . . .

"Imagination as well as beauty," was Raycroft's verdict, expressed more or less judicially to curtail the over-excitable ravings of Fitzgerald. This was after the four men had bidden good-night to Lisa and Cortwright, and stood for a moment in front of the hotel to watch them whirled away by Yoshan. "Needs training, of course. Still, with training, I'm not saying. . . . There isn't any chance, I suppose," he addressed the question to Snyder, who had known Philip longest and presumably most intimately, "that Cortwright would consider. . . ."

"*Hm*, hardly." Snyder was no gossip. His chief feeling in regard to Smalley, whom he ran into now and then when it couldn't be avoided, was that some day somebody would feel obliged to horsewhip the chap. "No. I should say not. He's had her since she was a mite of a thing. Bought her from a band of gypsies, according to the story. . . . Is rather dependent on her in his own work, I believe. Seems to be a case of hands-off. . . ."

Fitzgerald snorted. "A gift like that to be sacrificed!

A girl like that. . . . Radiant, radiant being,—of fire and dew. . . ." He ground his teeth;—blew with a whistling sound through his nostrils. . . . Fortunately, they had come to the corner where he and Simington would turn.

"She *is* one of the most bewitchingly graceful creatures I have ever seen," Raycroft conceded, as the two elder men walked on. "Had to sit on the tail of Fitz's kite a bit. It's the way the Irish affect me. . . . By Jove! I've been racking my brains all evening; but I'll be damned if I can remember who it is she reminds me of. . . ."

"Lisa!" Cortwright's voice, mingling with the low hum of the car, came to her through a rosy mist of dreams:—"Lisa, you can't say 'no' to me to-night. . . . Don't you understand, child, that life without love isn't worth the living. . . . I love you! I love you! For God's sake, Lisa. . . . I'm like a man starving for a drink of water. . . . One kiss,—only one!"

She did not seem to hear him. The triumph of the evening was still in her veins like drugged wine.

"Lisa dearest! You love me a little, don't you? You'll let me teach you what love means?"

His arms stole about her. . . . "Haven't I always been good to you? Have you any other friend who would do for you what I have done? Only be good to me, Lisa . . . and we'll be happy,—happier than anything you have ever dreamed! We'll travel. . . . I'll take you to Hawaii,—to Japan. . . ."

It was not the first time he had promised this; but

for the first time the words carried a distinct meaning to Lisa. . . . To step into his world;—to be accepted by his friends. . . . The swift motion of the car, the silent streets through which they were passing seemed all a part of the night's enchantment. . . .

"Lisa,—pretty bird. . . . How your heart beats. . . ."

His own beat hot against it. . . .

Perhaps what he said about love—was true. . . . And, oh! she did want to be happy;—she wanted to be happy *so much!*

## CHAPTER IX

### IN APRIL WEATHER

IT was a windy morning toward the end of April that Cortwright looked up from the paper he was reading with an exclamation of regret:—

"Poor chap! Can't say I'm surprised. . . ."

Lisa, standing in the wide sea-window, spoke without turning her head:—"What is it?" The tone was listless, almost indifferent.

"Martyn,—Robert Martyn. Died of heart failure after pneumonia in New York. . . . Been working too hard, I expect. That woman was without pity. . . . Seemed all fagged out a year ago when I saw him. Here's something about your old friend. . . . You remember Michael?"

"Michael? Oh, yes!" Lisa turned. "I would like to see Michael again. . . ."

"Well,—this sounds as if you would soon have the chance." He read:—

"'*Mr. Martyn was fifty-two years old. While he had been seriously ill for some weeks, death came unexpectedly. The painter's wife and only son were at the bedside. . . .*'

"Then follows the usual obituary tribute,—which I'll skip. He left nothing that counts. . . . Brilliant fel-

low,—'lost on the reefs of matrimony,' would be the suitable epitaph. And here we come to Michael:—

"'*In a statement issued this evening by J. G. McGruder, the young violinist's manager, it is said the death of the elder artist will not interfere with the Western trip of the son. Young Mr. Martyn will leave for the Pacific Coast, as per schedule, early next week; arriving in Los Angeles in time to keep his opening engagement at Corona Beach, May 14th. Contrary to custom, Mr. Martyn makes a clean skip from East to West, deferring till the return itinerary the series of recitals he plans to give in all cities of any size between here and New York. Though having studied many years in Germany, it is said to be owing to the affection he feels for the Pacific Coast, where as a child he began his violin career under the guidance of his father, that to Corona is awarded the honor of his Western début. While only twenty-four years old, Michael Martyn has obtained much success in the musical field and is heralded as one of America's future violin virtuosos. The series of recitals given by him in New York and other Eastern points during the last two winters have signalled him out as one of the most remarkable interpreters of the so-called 'modern music.' It is said Mrs. Martyn will join her son later at Corona. . . . The proceeds of the Corona Concert go to the Committee for Men Blinded in Battle.*'

"That's something new. . . ." Cortwright clutched his pockets, laughed. . . . "They get you at every turn, these days! Incidentally, rather a neat little trick of advertising. . . . I'm not suggesting he isn't sin-

cere. May 14th . . . We'll be able to run over in the car. . . .".

"I—don't want to go. . . ." Lisa turned again to the window.

"Don't want to go?" Cortwright got up and crossed to her. "I thought you said you did. . . . What's the matter, child? You're not yourself this morning. Has anything happened to disturb you?"

"No,—oh no!" She shot him a swift glance and he saw with surprise that her eyes were full of tears. . . .

"Lisa,—what is it? Tell me. . . ."

"The spring,—perhaps. . . ." she said. Her lips quivered. "I didn't sleep last night. . . . *Don't* bother, —please. I'll be all right,—if I go for a walk. . . ."

Philip turned to get his hat.

"No,—no! I don't want you. . . ." Her clouded expression gave way to a flash of intense irritation. "I am going by myself!"

"Very well." He drew back flushing. Then on an impulse he instantly regretted:—"You're not planning to meet Fitzgerald?"

Lisa threw up her head. A quivering flame of hurt, anger, shame, burned from throat to brow:—

"Planning to meet Mr. Fitzgerald! How like you! . . . Has anything happened to disturb Lisa," she mocked. "Oh, no! Lisa must be gay. . . . She must be charming,—ready to work or play whenever *you* are ready! She must account to you for every whim and mood. She must not go out by herself,—for fear of meeting . . . Mr. Fitzgerald!" She stamped her foot.

"He's dead in love with you," Cortwright persisted,

stubbornly. "You know it as well as I. He can hardly take his eyes off your face. . . . What else was there to bring him to San Miguel?"

"Love! That's what men *talk* about. . . . You promised to teach me what it means. . . . I know now! It means,—possession! I hate it all. . . . I hate myself. . . ." A little sob that she gulped and swallowed. "Oh!" On a rapid gesture of revolt, of denial, with both hands she seemed to push him from her:—

"It's spring! The gulls have wings,—and the winds are free. . . . You think I *belong to you!* I don't. . . . I won't. . . . Why couldn't you have left me to drown that day you took me from the sea? I wish,—I don't know what I wish! . . ." She turned and ran from the room.

Cortwright did not try to stop her. The mood would pass as other moods had passed. He stepped to the window and watched her skimming down the cliff,—her motions swift and sure as some low-sweeping swallow.

Lisa herself would have found it hard to account for her sudden outburst against Philip. When he had first spoken of Michael's coming to San Miguel she had felt a flash of pleasure; instantly followed by the thought —what pleasure could there be for her in such a meeting now? . . .

With the passing of the years those childish days with Michael had come to seem to Lisa like some tender, delicately cherished dream. . . . What a world of rainbow happiness theirs had been! Beautiful in sunshine, beautiful in storm. . . . How they had laughed and shouted to one another racing over the wet sands!

There were no such seashells nowadays as the shells they used to find. . . . Dimly through the mists of the past, she saw Michael's boy's eyes looking at her,—sweet and blue as flowers. . . . Once, she remembered, he had made her a necklace of seaweed. . . .

Lisa shook herself. Sat up. . . . The ripples danced and the sun shone. White wings of gulls flashed and wheeled against the blue. . . . She pressed her hands against her breast,—surprised that her heart should lie heavy there . . . like a stone. Was it really the coming of the spring that made her fret so against Philip's possessive exigencies?

A week ago she had been ready to laugh at his jealousy of Fitzgerald, just as she laughed at Fitzgerald's obvious infatuation for herself. Early in March, Sam Simington, despairing of converting a benighted public to any practical form of approval of his bar-room fantasies, had carried out his threat to come down to San Miguel and "paint fish. . . ." Fitzgerald promptly followed. The two young men were putting up at the hotel. Cortwright, cordial enough at first, had soon grown restless. Lisa, never able to resist an opportunity to tease, found a certain amusement in the situation. . . .

But not this morning. Flat on the stretch of sunny beach, the warm wind beating over her, she wished . . . she had never gone up to Los Angeles to that theatre party which at the time had seemed to her so wonderful! She wished she was a little girl again, hiding with Michael in their secret cave. . . .

What had become of all Philip's fine promises?—of

travel,—of a new, wonderful, unguessed happiness? On the surface, since their return to the studio, they had taken up their life very much where they had dropped it. Only that morning, quite without preface, quite as if it were a matter of course, Philip had said:—

"I shall want to make a sketch after breakfast. . . . I've a new idea. . . . Something rather ripping, it seems to me."

Then he had absorbed himself in his newspaper, and Lisa had turned to the window to stand looking out at the shimmer of the wind's invisible feet, dancing, dancing, as her own spirit longed to dance, far over the sunlit stretches of the sea. . . . Suddenly she had felt herself blushing to the very roots of her hair. She had never felt that way about posing for Philip before. . . . It was a moment later that he read the notice about Michael,—and she to his obvious bewilderment had flared out at him. . . .

It was because Lisa could not make up her mind till the last moment whether or not she really did want to hear Michael play, that the seats they got were so far forward. By the time Cortwright wrote for tickets every place was engaged. It was only by chance and at a price over which he winced that the management finally was able to offer him two seats in the second row off the main aisle. Apart from people's desire to hear Michael Martyn, war charities, since the sinking of the *Lusitania*, had boomed. . . .

Philip did not try to hide his annoyance. "I told you what would happen. . . . Nothing so expensive as

a woman's whims!" It was part of his sense of possession that he permitted himself to scold her.

She looked at him; but said nothing. She was trying very hard to control herself these days. Her new thought was:—"Perhaps even yet, if I manage right, he will marry me. . . . People will be quick enough then to forget there was anything wrong."

The concert was to be held in the Buena Vista hotel, —an old time hostelry that had been several times remodeled. The building was of wood, in Mission style, with cloisters and a central patio. It was the fascination of the old Spanish gardens dipping to the sea that had kept up the prestige of the place.

They took the elevator to the roof, which, in process of reconstruction, had been glazed in; and was used interchangeably as a ball-room or informal auditorium according to circumstances. Already there was a crowd:—people standing back against the walls and blocking the outside corridors. It was exactly half-past eight when Lisa and Cortwright slipped into their places. . . .

A rustle among the audience. A ripple of polite applause. Michael Martyn and his accompanist, entering by a small side door, crossed to the front of the platform, bowed right and left. . . . The accompanist then returned to the piano. The violinist stood for a moment alone.

Lisa leaned forward watching. Was it really Michael, —this slender, delicate young fellow, with the easy, aristocratic carriage and the fine-featured dreamy face? There was something singularly attractive in the way

he stood. . . . His blue gaze that had almost the sweet earnestness of a girl's (though this effect might be in part attributable to the long dark lashes) sweeping the sea of faces raised to his. . . . She might have guessed he would be like that!

"I am going to ask you to close your eyes; and I will close mine."

The request came as a surprise to everybody.

"You now hear my voice; but you cannot see me. You may reach out your hand and by touching your neighbor feel that you are not alone. We know that this room is bright with lights and with the faces of beautiful women. Such knowledge without participation is nothing but longing. . . ."

The charming inflection, the perfect enunciation, clear-cut, decisive, yet without emphasis, carried the words with complete distinction:—

"Ladies and gentlemen,—open your eyes again! For us, the shadow of this war shall pass. For the Allied soldiers, blinded in battle, to whom the box receipts of this concert go, it is forever. What can pay a man for the loss of heaven's light?"

An instant's silence like suspended breathing (already we are beginning to forget the dynamic emotionalism of that tense, expectant spring), and the concert had begun. . . .

For the first two numbers Lisa sat as in a trance. Always acutely responsive to music, the power, the grace, the passion, of those magic strings seemed to lift her up, to wrap her away, from everything she had ever known or thought or felt. It was as if in a dream

she had been carried into another world, where nothing could exist but that which was pure and beautiful and good,—like Michael's voice, like the words he had spoken. . . . The music flowed on;—a sweet and cleansing stream it purged Lisa's heart. . . .

Again she shut her eyes,—this time to hide the starting tears. What was the use of living,—if you couldn't be happy and good! Suddenly she felt herself shaken by a tragic tremulous wish that something might happen so that she could die that night,—her spirit washed clean by the joy and wonder of Michael's playing. . . .

"Shall we go back and meet him afterwards?" Cortwright asked.

"No. . . . Oh, no!" Her answer was almost a gasp of pain.

The audience was applauding insistently for an encore. Lisa could not clap. She could scarcely breathe. But if the music did not begin again, she felt that she would cry aloud. . . . Hardly conscious of what she did she found herself standing,—her hands pressed against her breast, looking up at Michael with dark imploring eyes. . . .

"Sit down!" Whatever else Philip might have intended to say was lost.

Michael had begun to play once more. Just for a moment his glance had rested in Lisa's. Then with a charming bow and smile he bent his cheek to his instrument. . . .

A whisper and stir of melody,—lost notes that seemed to quiver through a mist of suffering. . . . A sudden stabbing cry; followed by swelling chords of strength,

of courage. . . . A quickening measure thrilling to unhoped gladness. . . . The conquering choral echo of faith triumphant over pain. . . .

Still and intent, men and women followed the flying bow, the white flash of wonder-weaving fingers. Unaccompanied, as occasionally happened with a sympathetic audience, Michael was improvising. . . .

An acrid smell of smoke. . . . The young man at the piano sprang to his feet. . . . From a wall-closet just back of him shot out a slender tongue of flame. . . .

"*Fire! Fire!*"

Somewhere near the back of the room the hoarse cry rose.

The smell of smoke grew stronger. . . . A faint crackling as of burning wood. . . . A rustle and rush of terror. . . .

The panic which followed must have been largely due to the fact that people felt themselves in a trap,—penned on the roof of the hotel. Chairs were overturned. . . . Women screamed. . . . A senseless surging mob, those who had been sitting a moment before, rapt, lifted out of themselves, fought and struggled in the exits.

Lisa saw Michael step to the edge of the platform:—

"It's nothing." His clear cool tones sought to dominate the riot. "We'll have it out in a minute. There's no danger. . . ."

The next thing she knew was a blow on the head. Some maddened fool had struck her down,—would have trampled her had not Philip caught her in his arms. In the jam and crush that followed she lost consciousness. . . .

When she came to herself she was in the hotel gardens. The fire was already out. No one had been much hurt. A few women had fainted. The only serious accident was to the young violinist. He had burned his hands rather badly attempting to put out the blaze by smothering it with his coat. Hotel employees, arriving promptly with chemical extinguishers, finished it. . . . A matter of crossed wires;—people could be thankful for a narrow escape. A doctor was dressing Mr. Martyn's burns. They were painful rather than critical. The worst feature of the case was it would probably be several months before he could play again. . . .

## CHAPTER X

### HOW MICHAEL FINDS THE SLEEPING BEAUTY AND WAKENS HER FROM A BAD DREAM

THE week following the concert Cortwright received a letter from his New York agents, Lyons and Livermore (old friends and associates of his father), to whose Fifth Avenue gallery "Clouds and Star" had been dispatched immediately on completion.

The new work was attracting most favorable attention. Indeed, it could have been sold twice over, the morning of the private view, old Peter Lyons wrote, had not he and his partner held back. They hoped Philip would approve their course. John Madison was in town. Three times had he been in, to stand, silently appraising, before the thing,—hands clasped behind him, heavy brow lowered. Philip would understand there was no possible pressure to be brought, no hope of influencing the old man's slow decision. But it was an opportunity that would hardly occur again. If he felt it wise to make a flying trip? . . . His arrival in New York at this time would appear perfectly natural; and there was a bare possibility "personal equation might help tip the scales." In which event, there could be little question that "Clouds and Star" would shortly take its place in the Madison collection at the Metropolitan. . . .

Philip's face lighted as he read.

"I'll have to go to New York, Lisa. . . ." He sprang up, tossed the letter to her across the table. "It's the chance of a life-time! A man would be a fool to ignore it. . . ."

"Oh!" She read and started up in her turn. "How exciting! When do we go?" Her present mood would have welcomed any change.

"My dear,—can't you see? It's not possible,—this trip. I'm sorry, of course. . . ." He put out his hand to draw her to him; but she turned away with an air of proud indifference.

"Lisa,—surely you understand!" He followed her across the room; with two fingers lifted her chin, turning her averted face that he might look down into it. "I thought you had more common-sense. Can't you see what an opportunity like this means? Whims—whims—whims. . . . I hardly know you any more, Lisa."

"No! I hardly know myself. . . ."

Philip, anxious to avoid anything unpleasant, answered at random. "What did she want him to bring her from New York? Wasn't it something her loveliness should live on?—giving joy to people yet unborn. . . . Perhaps a hundred years from now someone would stand before the image of that young girl with the blown hair and the high held star. . . ." A jaunty spring in his step, he left the room to give orders to Yoshan. Truth to tell, he found himself looking forward to the trip almost in the light of a holiday.

It wasn't that he wasn't still sincerely attached to Lisa. Apart from his infatuation for her beauty, there

was a touch of real tenderness, a sentimental appreciation of his own conduct,—past and to come. He had every intention of taking care of her,—always. . . . Philip told himself approvingly hardly one man in ten would take the responsibility as seriously as he took it. Why, the devil, then, couldn't she show a little more responsiveness,—a little more appreciation?

He honestly considered he was being very amiable and forbearing. If there was one thing he detested it was being made uncomfortable; and Lisa's companionship the last week or two had not been conducive to comfort. Her obvious efforts at gaiety, alternating with lapses into moody spells of silence; above all the deep brooding gaze of those dark eyes he had surprised more than once fixed upon him, were beginning to worry Philip.

He had never had any intention of marrying Lisa. Certainly, he did not intend it now. He was anything but a weak man. Passion had forced him into a situation he regarded as quite as detrimental to himself as it could be to her,—considering their relative prospects and social positions. Philip was intensely conventional. What people said and thought had always been a matter of the utmost importance to him. He did not feel he could give Lisa up,—yet. She was essential to him,—both in his art and in his emotional life. . . . Try as he would, he could not free himself from her spell. Fortunately, at San Miguel he considered they were more or less buried. There was nobody much to talk, —except Smalley. And who ever paid any serious attention to Smalley's gossip? Mrs. Southwick and

the O'Learys he also discounted. Their approval could be regarded as of little more than local importance.

Philip coolly realized that with time the situation was bound to adjust itself. . . . Meanwhile it was with an actual feeling of holiday he packed and made his arrangements. Yoshan should be given a vacation. The old couple who had before taken care of the studio would stay with Lisa, till Philip's return. Mrs. Semple with her sharp little eyes, her scanty screwed-up hair, might not be an ideal companion from a young girl's point of view. In the rôle of duenna she fitted in with Cortwright's plans very well. It gave an added sense of satisfaction that Simington and Fitzgerald should have gone on again. Simington because, according to his own confession, he had found there was "nothing chromatic about a fish but its scales;—" Fitzgerald in a fit of pique over Lisa's heartless mockery. . . .

These matters promptly and efficiently arranged for, Philip was ready to leave on the noon stage. A recent shift in the schedules brought two mails now,—morning as well as afternoon. . . .

"Good-bye. . . . Be a good girl." He kissed her almost lightly. . . . "Now the other cheek."

She submitted rather than in any way responded to his caress.

"Lisa! What a downcast look. . . . Haven't you a smile for me to carry away with me?"

Instantly he was sorry he had teased; for with a flash of the old passionate spirit she turned on him:—

"You are a wicked, wicked man!" she cried.

"*Lisa!* Is this to be our farewell?"

Half repentant she lifted her face again:—"I don't know what's the matter with me. . . . Perhaps when you come back. . . ."

Yet that very afternoon it came to Lisa with an overwhelming rush that she would never resume the old relations,—never! *never!* She had been walking barefoot along the wet sands. She scarcely knew she had been thinking at all. . . . The mood in which she had set out had been one of restless resentment. Philip ought to have taken her to New York! All that talk about traveling together,—about meeting his friends,—had been nothing but pretense . . . a trap to catch and hold her. . . . Bitterest of all was the knowledge that she, Lisa, always so cautious, so distrustful, so afraid that someone would try "to cheat" her,—had let herself get caught! Her lips trembled and slightly parted. She ground her little white pointed teeth, as a snared squirrel might have done. . . .

Gradually her anger ebbed. Alone with sea and sky she found herself breathing deep,—filling her lungs with long revivifying drafts of the keen salt air. She removed her hat that the wind might blow her hair about. Now and then she dabbled her toes in the waves,—skipped,—took a little dancing step. . . .

He would not be there when she got back at night! He would not be there in the morning! She began to sing under her breath. . . .

Coming to a friendly brown rock about which white frothed ripples splashed, she ran out, scrambled up on it,—holding her skirts close, huddling her knees to her

chin. . . . The sea was blue and calm that afternoon. . . . The sky without a cloud. . . .

Did she belong to Philip,—or did she belong to herself? She was twenty years old, perhaps. . . . There was a long stretch of life ahead. . . . She had made a mistake . . . a terrible mistake! But it wasn't a mistake that need ruin everything. . . .

If she could only get away from San Miguel! People talked about her dancing. . . . Even Mr. Raycroft, who had seen all the famous dancers, showed plainly enough what he thought. . . .

Ever since that glamorous moment in the theatre,—the throb of the pulses, the flash of the nerves, that had proclaimed:—"This,—this is the lost thing I have found," Lisa had remained consistently conscious of a nostalgic sense of affinity between her own life and the life of the stage. It was inevitable that with the fading of that first illuminative impulse, the sense of oneness, of belonging, should be attributed by her to the future,—rather than to anything in the past. . . . Other girls no prettier than she, no more talented, had succeeded. . . . She recalled how Mrs. O'Leary had once said any manager would be glad to give her a chance. . . .

Well, then?

The footlights, the music, the conductor's baton, should all be hers, hers, hers! Huddled there on her rocky gulls' perch, all the sleeping talent in her wakened and danced to an imaginary house rocking to wild applause!

She wondered that she should ever have felt so help-

less, so incapable of extricating herself. It was Philip. He had always had the power to make her feel like that. Courage was what one needed. . . .

Wasn't that the message of Michael's music?

Her thoughts flew back to the night of the concert:—how almost without conscious volition she had risen in her place and cried out to Michael to help her. Without words she had cried to him. In a whole hallful none other had heard. But he had heard and answered; though he did not recognize her for the little Lisa whom years ago he had promised to take care of always. . . .

Michael was still at the Buena Vista. Lisa had been reading about him in the paper,—only the day before. He would be the very person to advise her,—to get her proper stage introductions!

But suddenly Lisa knew she would not go to Michael. . . .

Chilled, cramped, drabbled, she got up from the rock and walked home,—rather wearily. . . .

Many days after this Lisa spent on the sands dreaming about her future. Rather pathetic the dreams were—a mixture of childish ignorance and innocent vanity;—full of blind evasions, of impossible imaginative triumphs. She was too inexperienced to fill in practical details. There was only one definite point from which everything started. She must get away before Philip came home. Lisa realized Philip's power over her well enough to know that if she did not go before he came, she would not go at all. . . .

Yet day after day slipped by with nothing done. The

very touch of untamed wildness in her spirit was what caused Lisa to be timid. It was partly her timidity, partly her pride, that made her what people called deceitful. There was only one thing of which she had never been afraid. Strangely enough, that was the sea. The sea had taken her mother. She herself knew what it was to be snatched at, choked and strangled amid a wild swirl of hungry waters.

Yet on the hot white sands, the winds beating over her, Lisa found it easy to wish forgetfulness might have come that way. . . . Life with its problems oppressed. . . . Her limbs were leaden. There was no energy in her to carry out the projects her mind formed. She could not account for her lassitude, her lack of resolution. Finally, she decided she must be ill. The day came when she made up her mind to go down to the village and consult the doctor.

He was the same doctor who had taken care of her when she had had the fever as a little girl:—an old man now. One of the first questions he asked her was if she and Mr. Cortwright were married. . . . Lisa left his office, white, shaken, almost senseless with the horror of the thing that had happened. . . .

The doctor did not suspect the full force of the blow. For she had controlled herself:—

"It will be all right," she told him through numb lips.

He had advised her writing to Cortwright. She realized there was nothing else she could do. But when she tried to write she found it impossible. . . .

All night she walked her room,—back and forth, back and forth,—like a wild thing trapped. . . .

Even if Philip should marry her (Lisa in her heart was more than doubtful of this), what could such a marriage mean? After her days of dreaming freedom, the thought was like the thought of slavery. Bitter, bitter, was her humiliation. . . .

She knew well enough now that she had never loved Philip. In a moment of weariness, of intoxicated vanity, he had taken a cruel advantage. For a few months, flattered by his protestations, his glowing promises, she had surrendered to his passion. The awakening had come gradually. Vaguely restless and dissatisfied even before his departure,—dumbly resentful of his almost sultan-like claims,—once free of his dominating presence her feeling had grown to one of utter revolt and physical repulsion. . . .

Yet if he would not marry her? Was there anything else that could happen,—anything, anything at all? Dry stormy sobs shook her as she walked back and forth, —back and forth. . . .

It was only toward morning that a thought came,—strangely soothing and friendly. It did not seem to be a new thought; but something that had been slowly growing in her mind for a long time. . . . . There need be no shame,—no public disgrace. . . . No one need ever guess. This way, even Philip would no longer have the advantage! The doctor might suspect;—but once it was all irrevocably over . . . she believed—he would keep her secret. . . .

Standing in the wide sea-window with white set face Lisa stared out at the pearly mists of morning. Light came slowly. . . . Having taken her final resolve, she

told herself she was glad there need be no hurry. . . . To-morrow,—next week. . . . Lisa loved the wind and the sun. . . .

Spent with the night's emotions she fell asleep that morning on the sands. Even in sleep her trouble followed her. She moaned, moved restlessly,—sobbed with little catching breaths. . . .

A hand touched hers lightly. Someone was bending over her. . . . Frightened she started up.

"You were having bad dreams. . . ."

It was Michael. His smile, so sweet, so charmingly friendly,—half amused, half sympathetic, wholely sincere,—made it seem all at once natural he should be there. . . .

"Horrid to have bad dreams. . . . I often do. You didn't mind my waking you?"

"Dreams! Oh, if only. . . ." Lisa caught herself up sharply. Her dark childishly dilated eyes filled with slow tears. . . .

"Come!" Michael patted her hand, laughing at her. "I believe you aren't quite awake yet. You haven't asked me how I got here,—or anything. . . ."

"How did you, then?"

"Why, the night of the concert,—there was a girl stood up when all the others were clapping. I hadn't been going to play again. Encores are stupid. But her eyes. . . . Lisa,—I didn't know till after the fire. Then I asked the management. I had to find out who that girl was! Fortunately there had been some trouble

about tickets. So when I told them where she sat they remembered Mr. Cortwright. . . .

"Of course, when I first planned for this Western trip I intended running over to look you up. . . . That was one of my reasons for selecting Corona. . . . I wonder if *you* have always remembered,—as I have, Lisa?

"This is our cave, isn't it? I didn't have a bit of trouble finding the way. At first, actually, I had planned to wriggle through the tunnel! I'd forgotten what little shavers we must have been. . . . So I came round the point;—where a jolly big wave splashed me. . . . And found the Sleeping Beauty,—having a bad dream! May I stay and visit a bit?"

"I—suppose so. . . ." Lisa breathed short and quick. But as Michael talked on, quite naturally, with a sort of droll whimsicality that seemed almost as if he were apologizing,—asking her to forget that he had stolen on her unawares, she regained something of her composure. . . .

He had seen a notice of Cortwright's New York visit in the morning paper. "Clouds and Star" had been purchased for the Metropolitan by John Madison;—the gift had been passed on and accepted by the committee. Mr. Cortwright, it was said, was to be a guest on the Madison yacht for a summer cruise up the Maine coast.

This was all news to Lisa. She had had no letter from Philip for over a week. If the report were true, he would probably not be home till September. She found herself catching at the thought. With Michael

sitting there on the sands beside her,—so entirely natural and friendly,—it came like a reprieve. . . . Why shouldn't she forget and be happy,—for one short month?

"Lisa, when you look out at the sea like that,—your eyes. . . . You aren't in any kind of trouble,—are you, Lisa? Don't you remember how you used to tell me your troubles. . . ."

"No,—oh, no!" she denied. "There isn't anything at all. . . . Only,—I've been very lonely. . . . You see, —all the *good* ones I ever cared for,—Owen and Katheryn Griffeth, and Mr. Brentwood, and *you*,—went away. . . ."

She caught her breath.

Looking into her face Michael thought it was the sweetest, loveliest, saddest thing he had ever seen.

He bent forward, took her hand. "That *was* hard lines. Anyway, I can tell you, I'm glad to be here now. And I'm going to stay,—till you get tired of me! I can't play again, the doctor says, for Heaven knows how long. . . ." His left hand was still bandaged and suspended in a dark silk sling. "So all my concert engagements have had to be postponed. There's a funny side to it. I'm a regular king over there. They're so afraid I'll bring suit. . . . And the ladies who 'adore' Debussy! You know the kind?"

Lisa nodded. "Like the girls I used to go to school with. . . ."

"Well then,—what's to prevent my moving over to the old hotel here? Where you are I can *think* music,

anyway. . . . And we'll forget the years,—and take up our friendship where we left it,—shall we, Lisa?"

"If—you want to. . . ."

The look that accompanied the words made Michael think of a look he had seen years ago in the eyes of a pet spaniel his mother had tired of and ordered shot. Over the fate of that spaniel his boyhood had shed bitter, unavailing tears. . . .

## CHAPTER XI

### "OUT OF THE WHIRLWIND"

MICHAEL said that to be with Lisa was like thinking music.

Lisa thought, but did not say, that to be with Michael was like finding a new voice in the stars, the wind, the sun. . . . All day and every day they were happy together,—just as it used to be when they were children.

Lisa often wondered at her own capacity for happiness. When Michael laughed, she laughed too,—without pretense or effort. When he talked she loved to lie and look up into his face. Michael's face, she told herself, was like the sky. . . . In the sunshine of his companionship she found it impossible to believe in the dark clouds that threatened her own horizon.

Something would happen,—something *must* happen to save her, even yet!

The solution that had come to her so soothingly in the first hours of her tragedy she shrank from now. What could it mean but cold oblivion,—forever? . . . For the first time in her life she began to be afraid of the sea. . . .

Something must happen! Yet day after day drifted by. . . .

Lisa had had a letter from Cortwright, written before he set out on his yachting cruise:—

He was having a fine vacation. The sale of "Clouds and Star" had added a pretty figure to his bank account! What did she want him to bring her when he came home? . . . He hoped she was being a good girl,—and getting a rest. He planned to take up work with new zest in the fall,—there was nothing like success to whet a man's appetite. . . . Lisa was going to be glad to see him, wasn't she? They'd have plenty of good times together yet. . . .

Lisa crumpled the letter in her hand. Then set a match to it. Selfish! cruel! false!

All "the good ones," who might have taught her to be good, had gone away. . . .

She remembered how when at school she had gone to chapel with the others and everybody sat so still and solemn, she used to think it funny. They didn't really believe in the prayers they said, the hymns they sang. . . . Or, if they did, it couldn't count for much;—believing in God half an hour every morning!

She found herself looking back with regret on her scepticism. Oh, if only she had been good,—always good,—she needn't be so afraid what Michael might hear! Sometimes it seemed to Lisa she was even more afraid of that than of the fate that was creeping on herself. . . .

The long summer days, golden with sunshine, wakened in her a terrible hunger for new happiness;—the nights brought sleepless, wasting despair.

Her greatest practical consolation was that Smalley

had gone North on a fishing trip. His was the tongue she most dreaded. . . . Michael did not seem to care about getting acquainted with the new people. He was always telling Lisa how happy he was:—

"I don't even miss my violin when I'm with you! A violin can't be a man's whole life. . . . You see, I was such a little shaver when they put my nose to the grindstone. And, my, but I've worked! Not that I regret it. . . . Not that it hasn't had its compensations."

He spoke of his father and his face shadowed. "Only fifty-two. He oughtn't to have gone out like that." Everything Michael was he owed to his father. It was his father who had first taught him to toil and study and sacrifice. . . . "I used to think he was hard on me. But thank God, I understood even then,—it was just that he cared so much. . . ."

Michael's eyes came back to Lisa's face and rested there:—

"Lisa,—will you believe it? I used to be afraid of loving anything. . . . I used to think a man couldn't be a great musician and love at the same time."

He laughed. His look was like a caress.

"When I take up my violin again,—there'll be a new voice in it! That first night at the concert,—what was it you tried to ask me, Lisa? I felt I *had* to answer. . . ."

"You *did* answer," she said in a low tone.

But sometimes Michael's mood would be one of sheer boyish fun and high spirits. When this was the case, he liked to tease her about her "gypsy kin."

"That young fellow, now,—who called himself your

brother. . . . What was his name? Pretty looking customer, I must say. Nice manners, too! Frisked my knife while I stood listening to the old lady. . . ."

"He didn't like you because you have blue eyes. Gypsies never like fair people very much," Lisa explained. "I don't believe Sylvestre would take anything from me,—even if. . . . Oh, Michael,—you don't believe I'm a gypsy! That was the reason I never got on well at school—because they believed it. . . . You don't believe it,—do you, Michael?"

"What difference can it make?" he answered. "You're Lisa,—aren't you?"

She did not tell him of her last interview with Sylvestre,—nor of the message he had brought from Mamá Soledad. Reticence was second nature to Lisa. Besides, she could not bring herself to admit the gypsies had any claim. . . .

It was about this time the news came,—a shock at first, then, almost a reassurance,—that good old Dr. Beveredge having undergone a "successful" major operation in a Los Angeles hospital, had never come out from the anæsthetic. . . . There was nobody else,—nobody at all,—who *knew!* . . .

Though Michael talked of almost everything else he rarely talked of his mother. Once, in a rather constrained way, he mentioned she was expecting to join him,—some time early in September. And Lisa, equally constrained, answered:—"Yes. . . ." She had seen that in the papers. . . . Even in the old days Lisa had been afraid of Judith.

Another afternoon when they were on the sands to-

gether Michael took her hand, examining one by one the smooth slender fingers:—

"You never wear rings any more. And you used to care so much for them. . . ."

He drew a ring from his own finger. It was a plain gold seal,—with the raised outline of a cross in place of the customary monogram.

"Will you wear this, Lisa? My father used to wear it on his little finger."

"Michael! Oh, Michael. . . . I don't think—I *can!*"

Despite her almost tragic protest, he slipped the ring in place; then bent to kiss it;—"I'm wishing it on, Lisa. . . ."

He did not dare to tell her, just yet, that when he had taken the ring from his dead father's hand, it was with the thought he would wear it only till he found the woman who was to be his wife.

It seemed entirely natural to Michael that he should love Lisa, though it was too soon yet, he thought, for her to know that she loved him. . . .

"Don't cry, little darling!" She was pale and trembling, her hands so cold in his. . . . "It won't make you unhappy to wear it, will it?"

"Unhappy?" She shook her head. . . . A tear fell on his hand. "Oh, Michael—I want so *much* to be happy!"

Then after a moment with what seemed a strange irrelevance:—"Michael, do you believe in—God?"

"Why, yes," he answered simply. "Don't you, Lisa? I don't think I could ever play another note if I didn't believe in God. . . ."

Other times Michael would talk of the war with a hot passion of indignation that was almost confusing to Lisa:—

"It's not because I was unhappy in Germany. . . . It's because I can't bear the things they are doing. . . . The deliberate destruction of beauty. . . . The wholesale shattering of happiness! Lisa, I do believe I accomplish something with my music;—when I play I try to make people understand and feel. . . . But sometimes I *know* that isn't enough. There've got to be Americans to lead America on . . . to give what those others are giving. . . . Those poor fellows blinded in battle. . . ."

He fell silent, a shadow in his blue eyes.

Lisa could never bear to see Michael unhappy. . . . She exerted herself to distract him;—to make him laugh and forget.

Yet her own heart was heavy with dread. . . . Smalley had returned to San Miguel;—and something that frightened her even more,—because she had not been expecting it,—Mrs. Semple had given notice. There was no explanation:—"Yes, she understood Mr. Cortwright had expected them to stay till he came home. . . . But they'd be leaving Saturday,—if Miss Lisa pleased. . . ."

Lisa, who had been lying on the warm hearthstone,—the late August fogs made an evening fire agreeable, and like a little cat she loved to stretch her length to the blaze,—got up as Mrs. Semple withdrew, passed to her own room, and opening the wardrobe door stood for a long time looking at her reflection in the full length mirror. . . .

Those cruel little corkscrew eyes! Oh,—she had never imagined any one could be so unhappy. . . .

It was the Sunday afternoon following the Semples' departure that Lisa, on her way to the beach, stopped abruptly to look at a little heap of trash scattered by the wayside. . . . A seashell, some twigs, a spray of faded mustard-bloom, a yellow feather. . . . Further on another shell with two or three pebbles,—such an apparently careless collection of playthings as some child might have left. . . .

An unobservant person would have passed without noticing. An uninitiated person, even noticing, could have made no correct deduction. But Lisa was neither unobservant, nor uninitiated. She had been well drilled by Sylvestre in the mysteries of the gypsy pateran.

To her the sign was explicit,—easy to read as the headlines of a newspaper:—

A band of gypsies had passed north a little after daybreak that morning. They were her own tribe of Island gypsies, the seashell said. There were both men and women in the party, indicated by the long and short twigs arranged V fashion between which the shell stood. The apex of the V pointed north. The condition of the spray of mustard (flowers meant there were children along), faded, but not yet dry,—the afternoon was overcast,—proved it had been gathered early that morning. The yellow feather gave the additional information the band was on one of its periodic peddling jaunts with wicker cages of canaries and parrakeets for sale. . . . The separate sign, a little further on,—three pebbles,

two white, one black, in a smaller shell,—could probably have been read by Lisa alone. It was one of Sylvestre's private signals:—He had waited for her in the cave till dark the day before. In two days he would return and must see her there. . . .

Lisa did not want to see Sylvestre. *His* eyes were every bit as sharp as Mrs. Semple's. . . . She stood for a moment lost in unhappy cogitation. . . . When she went on again it was slowly;—so that she arrived half an hour later than she and Michael had agreed to meet on the sands in front of the cave.

At first glance the beach appeared deserted. Lisa thought perhaps Michael had not waited. Looking again she discovered him, lying in the shadow of the archway, his face buried in his arms. Asleep,—she decided. It amused her to catch him so. . . . She ran lightly,—seated herself beside him. . . .

Michael, dear Michael! with his sunny laugh,—his blue eyes clear and trusting as a girl's. . . .

She put out her hand, almost timidly. . . .

He had not been asleep! For instantly he turned,—shook off her touch with a sickening shudder of repulsion. . . . Raised himself, sat staring at her; his face, at first white, slowly darkening to a blood-red surge of passion:—

"Lisa. . . . I've been talking to Smalley. . . . God damn him! I—struck him on the mouth! Lisa. . . ." His voice was hoarse, his whole aspect haggard, disheveled,—trembling with a terribly suppressed emotion. . . .

Lisa sat mute, the color ebbing from her face. . . .

"Lisa,—tell me *it isn't true!*"

Her startled tragic gaze never wavered from Michael's. With a little gasp she pressed both hands against her breast:—

"I know—what he'd say. . . . It—isn't true. Michael! *Oh, Michael!*" She began to weep, bitterly, uncontrollably, her face hidden in her hands. . . .

A moment's silence. . . . Michael's arms stole tenderly about her.

"Dearest! dearest. . . . It's just—I love you so. . . ."

Her face pressed against his coat, his hand soothing her, Lisa wept on. . . .

She had lied to him and she loved him. For the first time in her life she knew what it was to be ashamed of a lie;—for it was only with the lie that full knowledge had come to Lisa of what her love for Michael meant. . . .

He would discover that she had lied. How could he help but discover it! The contempt he would feel for her! . . . The cruel, the intolerable contempt she felt for herself! An agony of shame, of sorrow, pierced her, like the birth-pangs of a new soul.

"Lisa,—*please* don't cry! I want to tell you exactly how it happened. . . . I know I'm to blame. But ever since he came back he's been hinting,—the yellow cur! It got on my nerves, I suppose. So to-day, just before I came down here, I told him if he had anything to say to say it. . . . He began—and I struck him in the mouth. I don't think there'll be any more of that kind of talk. . . . But—I must have lost my grip,—waiting

for you—so long. . . . It would have been *so* easy,—so dead easy,—with any other girl. Lisa,—look up!"

Her weeping had ceased.

"I know how hard your life has been. God knows, I worship and reverence your purity. . . . It is for that I love you most. No other woman could ever be to me what you are. . . . Wild and sweet! I used to be afraid of loving. . . . Now the thought of life without your love. . . . Lisa sweetheart,—will you marry me? . . . to-morrow?

"I haven't spoken before, because I wasn't sure you loved me. . . . But you do love me,—*don't* you?"

"Oh, Michael. . . . You *can't know how* I love you!"

Her dark wet glance raised itself humbly to his. Michael put down his face. Their lips met and clung. . . .

For a while they sat in silence with clasped hands.

The tragedy of Michael's boyhood had been his mother's dominating jealous tyranny. As in the old days he had found it impossible to "tell anybody," so even yet he could not bring himself to put the situation into words. But he took it for granted Lisa understood if they were to be married without a storm, they must be married before his mother came. . . .

It was to her sensitiveness about her mysterious gypsy background, her equivocal position as model, that, from the first, Michael had attributed Lisa's distress at his love making. And these were the very points his mother would most certainly and cruelly attack. . . . Not, Michael told himself, that it would have made any great difference whom he loved. Had he, or his father either,

ever been allowed to have friends? Since his return from Germany,—since his father's death in particular,—he had felt the coils tightening. . . . A temperament like that was a scourge! And Fate in the facts of Lisa's history had supplied a hundred barbs. His mother would be coming now in little less than a week. In Michael's letters to her he had never mentioned Lisa's name. . . .

"Sweetheart, it's getting late. . . . There's a storm coming. . . ."

He lifted her hand to his lips, kissed again the ring he had wished on her finger:—

"Why do you look out at the sea like that, Lisa? You have forgiven me,—haven't you?"

"Oh, Michael!"

"Come then. . . ." He sprang up. "We'd better hurry. . . ."

The sky was sullen with lowering clouds. An angry brazen glow had succeeded the sunset. Far out the sea looked flat and glassy, beaten down by the winds. . . .

"*Hurry!* We've got to run for it!"

The premonitory drone of the storm, the ever-increasing tide, emphasized Michael's warning. They had been too absorbed to notice before. Now, as he spoke, a jagged flash of lightning stabbed the horizon,—followed by a spatter of heavy raindrops.

Head down, Lisa scudded before him along the already diminished margin of beach.

"Michael! We're cut off. . . ."

He pushed ahead of her to look.

"Back to the cave, Lisa. . . . Quick!"

Soaked, breathless, beaten by the rain, they stared at each other in the shelter of the rocky arch. A great wind had risen. . . . Moment by moment the sea was mounting on them. . . .

"This isn't going to do. . . . That ledge,—have you ever tried to make it?"

A narrow shelf of rock widened toward the mouth of the cave to potential foothold. It was perhaps on a level with their shoulders.

"I never have. . . . We—*must* try, Michael!"

The turmoil of the tempest drowned her voice. Rain and wind seemed to melt and blend in an aqueous welter of driven fury. . . . Another gleam of lightning showed the sea;—a black and turgid wall rearing itself to engulf them.

"Quick! Lisa,—quick!"

Somehow she was on the ledge. Somehow, Michael had followed. The cave reverberated with a clamor of voices,—the wash of the retreating waters; the crash and roar of thunder. . . .

On their perilous elevation, they clung to each other, bracing themselves against the rock. Michael had discarded his sling. One arm held Lisa to him; his free hand clutched the archway above his head. . . .

"Lisa, I love you. . . . I love you!"

"Michael,—*dear!*"

Another wave,—another, and another. They felt themselves dragged at, their feet almost swept from under them.

"Sweetheart,—try not to be afraid. . . ."

Her trembling made it hard for him to hold her. The mad racing of her heart shook them both.

Again the roar of elemental conflict. . . . The encompassing blackness, pierced awfully as by some fiery avenging sword.

Lisa cowered, hiding her eyes against Michael's breast. Heaven, which had heard her lie, would punish it. Michael's life as well as her own must pay. . . .

Momentarily the storm grew more terrible. To Lisa it was the furious voice of a justly roused God.

As a very little girl, believing wholeheartedly that her mother lived with God among the stars, Lisa had been sincerely, if superstitiously, religious. Her child's credulity shattered, and nothing else supplied, scepticism had grown up in its place.

At school the formal chapel exercises had left her quite untouched. Often as she had heard the Bible read, there had seemed no personal application. . . . Now, with a rush, the unseen world, was the vital world. . . . Suddenly, Lisa felt she understood how it was Judas Iscariot had gone out and hanged himself. . . .

"Sweetheart! Be still. . . ."

Michael had to fight with Lisa's struggle to free herself. It was all he could do to catch her back—steady and hold her. . . .

"If we die together, Lisa. . . ? What is there in the world that counts,—but love!"

With a little sigh she grew quiet. A flare of glimmering lightning revealed her face,—like a white flower, he thought, resting against his breast. . . .

"Michael. . . ." A lull in the storm brought her voice. . . . "What is—God?"

"Dearest, what can He be,—but part of the very love we feel in our own hearts. . . ."

Lisa found no reply. The words convicted her. She loved Michael,—and she had lied to him. . . . To lie to one you love was almost like betraying God Himself. . . .

Even the gypsies, despised and outcast among men, differentiated between deceiving an enemy and betraying a friend.

Michael's arms were warm and safe about her. She wore his ring on her finger. He had kissed her, and she had given back his kiss,—as Judas kissed Christ!

Philip had told Lisa how much he loved her. His love had been nothing but treachery;—cruel, selfish, false. . . . Was Lisa's love for Michael to be like that?

She could not do that thing toward which she had been drifting! But neither, she knew, could she ever confess to Michael the truth. Was there no other way, —but the sea? At the thought her head grew dizzy, her pulses faint. . . .

Michael said, God was part of the very love they felt in their own hearts;—and God had given Lisa her life. . . . Just to be alive was something. To know the freshness of spring mornings, the warmth of fire when you were cold and tired,—the keen tang of salty winds. . . .

Suddenly she felt strangely peaceful and at rest. The swish of the rain, the moan of the sea came to her dimly. . . .

She found herself thinking of the gypsy pateran. . . .

Gypsies wandered the country over, trudging often cold and hungry in the storm. . . . Nobody wanted them. . . . Driven from town to town hardly anybody had a good word for them. . . .

Yet that day in the cave Sylvestre had told the truth. A gypsy did not go back on his friends. Poor and miserable himself, he knew how to sympathize with misery. He would share his last pinch of tobacco,—his very homelessness, with one more homeless. . . .

"Sweetheart!" She felt Michael's lips on her eyelids. "It's morning. . . . You've been asleep. . . ."

"Michael! How pale you are! Oh,—you have stood there and held me. . . ."

But despite cramp and chill Michael seemed in the gayest of spirits.

"Brave little Lisa," he teased. "So afraid she was going to be drowned she had to try to throw herself into the sea! Look out at the sun. . . . To-day is the day we are to be married!"

"Not to-day! Not to-day, Michael, *mañana*. . . ."

"To-morrow, then. . . . Since you must be like every other woman!"

He laughed at her lapse into a tongue she was generally so careful to avoid. And Lisa, looking up into his face, laughed too. She never could help it with Michael.

Yet, in the familiar evasions of Spanish speech, *mañana* does not mean to-morrow. It means never. . . .

# *PART II*

## CHAPTER XII

### THE ISLAND

TWO gypsy girls were walking along a dusty road that trailed through a squalid scatter of 'dobe huts (you could scarcely call it a village) on into a smoky sea of rolling gray sage. It was that first half hour after sunset before the twilight falls, when the clear, rayless translucence of atmosphere seems to intensify the color of all nature.

The girls walked in silence, neither chattering nor singing. The droop of their shoulders, the drag of their feet, was in striking contrast to the usual free swing of their kind. It was plain to be seen that they were discouraged as well as dog-weary. They had been on the go since early morning, and had had no luck. The woven grass baskets they carried were still unsold.

Both girls were pretty, quite exceptionally so. But though a superficial glance would have remarked only the common resemblance in certain picturesque Oriental characteristics of black plaited hair, dark eyes, and lithe slender bodies, a more discriminating attention would have discovered an even greater distinction.

The younger of the two, with her pouting red lips, long curled lashes, the childish contour of coffee-brown shoulder visible through a rent in her soiled and tattered dress, possessed all the appealing charm and pathos of

some small pet animal. Hers was an ephemeral loveliness, wild, natural, as sure to wither with the years as a spring flower withers in the sun.

In the face of the elder girl was a different look altogether.

She, too, was obviously tired, obviously discouraged; depressed, one might almost have believed, by the foreknowledge of some definite dread still to be endured; but in the poise of the head, the carriage of the person, above all in the deep mystical glance of the great dark eyes, there was imperious magnetism,—that arresting, indescribable harmony of attributes which makes for absolute beauty. It was not merely a matter of features or of coloring. True beauty rarely is. But, worn as she was, dusty, disheveled with the day's tramp, there still remained an unquenched radiance, a soft alluring grace. No one could have passed her without a second look. She could not have been more than twenty-one or two. Yet as she stood for a moment,—their way had gradually ascended to the crest of a low hill,—to gaze out over the rolling stretches of parched country which the twilight shadows were now beginning to swathe and soften in enfolding waves of purple light, her face was illuminated by an expression of rapt and dreamy thoughtfulness,—an expression far beyond what could have been expected of her years or general vagabond condition,—totally different from the look of wistful endurance of the child by her side. . . .

"Sister, what's the use of stopping? If he's going to beat us,—he's going to beat us. Me—I'd rather hurry home ahead of him and get a bite to eat first.

I never can eat *afterwards* — not if it was *carne*, even. . . ."

"Perhaps he won't . . . to-night. We tried hard enough." The elder girl looked down at the string of little grass baskets hanging from her shoulders. "And to-morrow we'll be going on to Cerro Gordo. We ought to be able to sell them there."

She spoke hopefully; but it was more to encourage her companion than anything else. Visibly she herself shrank from the ordeal;—shrank from it with a sensitive physical antipathy that made it hard for her to go on,—to follow the other's lead down hill.

"Huh! Won't he, though? Well—not if he's drunk enough. He'll want to kiss you then,—and *she'll* fly out! Come on,—sister. There ain't no use stoppin' . . ."

That was true. There wasn't any use. Again they walked on in silence.

"Oh, well,—there'll be dancing after the round-up. He won't want to make us too stiff to dance." The child hunched her shoulders;—spat to the side of the road. "And I did sell one little basket. *Mira!* I have the *dinero* here. . . ." Slyly she displayed a knotted end of neckerchief, then tucked it back carefully inside her dress. "Don't you tell! I'm going to buy two red hair-ribbons. And, sister, I'll give one to you."

By this time they had come to a rocky declivity leading down to a sort of dry arroyo screened from the road by a bristling growth of yucca. Here they stopped a moment to listen. Then turned and began to scramble down the bank.

A few steps more revealed the ragged little brown tent, squatting like a lone mushroom in the sandy bed of the stream. A mangy mongrel, his premonitory growl gradually turning to a cringing whine of welcome came sidling to meet them. A heavy-looking, sullen-faced young woman with a sickly baby in her arms stepped to the opening of the tent.

"You're here at last, are you? Well,—it's time. And what have you been doing all day, I'd like to know?" with a quick malicious glance at the string of unsold baskets. "Oh, he'll give it to you! He'll give it to you hot and heavy! He ain't home yet,—but just you wait. . . ."

"Nobody wouldn't buy them. . . . We didn't even get nothing to eat."

The younger girl began to whimper, rubbing her fingers in her eyes.

"Nobody wouldn't buy them! Shut up, Toña. You knew well enough what you'd get, coming home without the *dinero*. What's your tongue for? Here,—take this bucket. I seen some cows the other side the wash. Perhaps, if you can get some milk for supper, he'll let *you* off."

The child, hanging her string of baskets inside the tent, seized the bucket and darted away. The older girl, having also hung up her baskets, turned to the water-pail. It was empty,—a patch of wet sand beside it revealing the shabby trick.

"No water for *la Reina?* Different on the Island,—wasn't it, sitting by looking at others work?"

Morella laughed as Lisa stooped to take up the empty

pail. "Might as well drink and cool off before your beating. He'll give it to you,—he'll give it to you hot enough! Say now,—that's not like having a chap ready to go down on his knees and cook your fish. . . ."

"Hold your tongue!" Lisa's eyes flashed. "How dare you speak to me of Sylvestre! You stole his boat. . . . You left him to die in the reeds. . . ."

"Stole his boat! I'll teach you. . . . Who says my husband stole anything. . . ?"

Morella's voice rose. Her quick ear had caught Secundio's lurching step outside. She intended that he should hear her. There was nothing in life that gave her such exquisite pleasure as to see him fall on Lisa with his heavy walking stick. . . .

Lisa also heard,—too late,—and shrank back, white faced, into the shadow of the tent. . . .

But Secundio had been drinking enough to make him feel affectionate. That was all he cared about;—to drink and to play his fiddle. With a maudlin smile, a bleary eye,—he entered,—looked this way and that:—

"Where is she?" he hiccoughed. "Where's my pretty little brown dove? Hiding in a corner? Frightened,—frightened of me?" He stumbled toward Lisa,—grabbed her round the waist. . . . "Let's kiss and make it up, *paloma!* I wouldn't hurt thee. . . . I wouldn't hurt my little brown dove. . . . Who cares for the old hen's cackle when there's a pretty little tame dove ready to his hand. . . ."

Lisa struggled, trying to fight him off. At the same moment Morella, seizing a small iron pot of cold beans

she had been intending to heat up for supper, launched it full at his head.

He might beat her. That was his right. The more he beat her, the more she admired him, apparently. But to kiss another woman before her very eyes! Let him look to that!

In the general mix-up that followed, Lisa made her escape.

Unable to endure the stifling cluttered little tent she had built herself a shelter of dry branches and brushwood in the mouth of an intersecting wash. Here she threw herself down. She wanted water . . . wanted it terribly! But she dared not be seen going for it. Her whole body shrank and trembled. The heavy pounding of her heart hurt her. . . . She was *so* afraid of Secundio!

The angry wrangle in the tent rose and culminated in the sound of sickening muffled blows. Then silence. . . . Morella never cried out when Secundio beat her. After a while Toña's scrambling descent could be heard. Lisa started up,—leaned out,—listening. . . . But the child must have succeeded in her errand, for there was no new disturbance.

Somewhere an owl hooted. Above the bristling yucca barrier that topped the opposite bank, the stars were brightening to points of living silver. Lisa sighed. . . . Another day was over! Perhaps after a while Toña would come with something to eat. . . .

The rocky island of San Cristobal had never counted for much in the eyes of the de la Rosa family:—whose

men affected politics, whose women cared only for society or the church. How should it? Holy Mother of God! Lower California doesn't count for much with most people. And the island was worse even than the Peninsula;—a very desert of a place, the barren slopes covered with sparse sun-dried stubble, the craggy bluff above the arc of glittering beach dotted here and there with cedars, shaggy, lop-sided, twisted by sea winds. . . .

"A jumping-off spot! Conjured by the devil and forgotten of him again," as Don Angeles in his palmy days used often enough to declare:—"Fit only for goats or for gypsies!"

Yet it was the goats, breeding and multiplying among the arid sand hills, that were destined to restore the depleted de la Rosa fortunes. It was among the gypsies Don Angeles himself found welcome during the period of his earlier political reverses.

If there can be nothing much more repellent than an old *gitana*, the young ones have their charm. Don Angeles was not the first man to discover this. Whether he actually went through the prescribed form of Romano marriage rite,—as certain considerate individuals tried later to make his family believe,—he did all his life acknowledge in a left-handed sort of way the gypsy connection.

They manage these things differently in Mexico; and Sebastian de la Rosa, "the *gitano* goldfinch," was openly called "cousin" by the young heir of the house. . . . It seemed then an ironic coincidence that the popular

tenor should have met his death by shipwreck off the shores of the very island reputed to be his birthplace.

The sunken reefs beyond San Cristobal had a bad name for wrecks. People are never slow to blame gypsies. What the sea swept upon the sands was theirs for the picking up. . . . There's history in a name, sometimes,—and ship captains told ugly stories of Falsa Luz Cape. None uglier than the rumors that gathered about the *San Francisco* disaster. . . .

Both Upper and Lower California had cause to remember that catastrophe,—for the tragic fate of the two stage favorites, Sebastian de la Rosa and Lyda Leigh. Whatever the true history of their relations (There had been gossip enough. People thought it a pity de la Rosa could not manage a divorce. . . .), they were together in the same life-boat lost with all hands amid the pounding surges of San Cristobal reef.

The following year, 1898, saw the erection of a lighthouse beyond the reefs, sponsored and financed by the Governor, General Filipe de la Rosa y Romaro, in memory of his "cousin," it was said. Since then there had been no more wrecks; but Mexican revolutions "as usual." The de la Rosas, like many another family of their caste, had risen only to fall again. . . . Scattered, hunted, in exile they wandered,—who knew where? The island had returned to the gypsies and the goats. . . .

The old ranch-house, deserted and in ruins, stood to the east of Pequeña Bay, a little natural harbor where the gypsies kept their fishing-boats, at the mouth of the salt-water creek that emptied itself in the shallow marsh

midway the island. It was along this creek the women gathered the rushes and grasses used in making their baskets and birdcages. Their camping place was the other side Falsa Luz Cape,—away from the ranch-house which they avoided.

Everybody knows it is bad luck for a gypsy to sleep under a roof. Also the place had a spirit. More than one had seen it;—sometimes in the form of an adder coiled watching on the flat stone before the hingeless door; sometimes in the shape of a great black goat with fiery eyes clattering through peals of thunder amid rain and lightning down Falsa Luz Cape to the bay. And storm or sunshine, there were always voices about the old house,—a continuous low rustle and whisper within its ruinous walls. . . .

It was to talk with these voices that Mamá Soledad, blind, decrepit, "called" but unable to go, would steal away from the tattered tents of the gypsy encampment, and staff in hand make her slow way somehow along the beach. There was no holding her back. Hour after hour she would sit in the roofless ranch-hall, amid drifted sands, talking and muttering to herself. Lisa was the only one not afraid to follow.

"You said she had something to tell me," she complained to Sylvestre.

"That's true;—but you came too late. . . ."

It did not matter, Lisa thought. Nothing seemed to matter any more, since that wild storm-tossed hour when her terrified soul had wakened to the Voice of God thundering out of the whirlwind. . . . As sometimes happens after a severe case of fever, a sort of numbed

apathy without keenness of either thought or feeling had settled on her spirit. . . .

The sun rose and set. Some days were chill and misty, others warm and bright. To the easy routine of the gypsy encampment with its *al fresco* housekeeping, its seeming utter carelessness of past or future, its mere instinctive physical happiness in existence, such as gull or squirrel might feel, she adapted herself without effort. No other environment could have suited so well her present limited gamut of sensation.

Sylvestre had welcomed her offer to return with him to the island, as she had known he would, with keen secret gratification which he did his best to hide under an indifferent manner. Lisa had given no explanation for her sudden change of mind. Whatever he might have guessed was hinted at only:—

"Sister, we Romano people are a queer sort of people, as you well know. There's not one of us gives a *centavo* what the world may think. But we have our own law. . . . A skinful of broken bones, now,—any time you say the word. . . ."

"No, Sylvestre! Oh, no. . . . All I want is to go back with you to the Island. . . ."

They had not waited for the rest of the band, and found only Mamá Soledad, a few old men, young children and mothers with little babies, left in the camp. This made it easier for Lisa. When the other gypsies did return some weeks later, they were kind and cordial enough in their rough way. Curiosity they must have felt; but they asked no questions. Only Morella, old time antagonist and rival, would shoot a meaning glance

now and then,—a supercilious raising of the eyebrows, an innuendo pointed by a sneer.

Morella, it seemed, had captured her Secundio,—who may have entertained regrets for his past freedom. At any rate, he beat her more frequently than could have been quite comfortable; and she often sat back from the camp fire of an evening to prevent people's noticing a black eye. She had to carry wood and water. It was plain to be seen she was not up to that sort of thing. . . . Secundio, a lazy little runt of a chap, with pock-marked face,—mischievous and good-for-nothing even in the gypsy sense of the word,—aspired to be the wit of the tribe. When he was not engaged in beating up his bride, he too frequently made her the butt of his rough horseplay. Lisa, in an impersonal sort of way, felt sorry for Morella and refused to pay any attention to her scornful glances.

So far as old Soledad was concerned, Lisa's return seemed to make little difference. Ravaged by time, feeble in limb and witless of mind, *la Vieja* lived only in the past. Day or night she could find no rest. It was as if her worn-out body, already half given over to corruption, was kept back from the grave by some black haunting spirit of terror, of remorse. . . .

"Do you believe, if she could tell me she would be free to go?" Lisa asked Sylvestre.

"*Qu'n sabe?* . . . She called for you, and you wouldn't come."

Sylvestre, like most of the gypsies, was frankly afraid of the old woman. Nothing would have induced him to follow her as Lisa did day after day. But Mamá Sole-

dad needed someone to watch out for her and accepted "*la niña's*" attendance without question,—scolding her and ordering her about just as she had done when Lisa was a little girl. . . .

Most people would not have thought there was much comfort to be found in the ruined ranch-house. Such rude and scanty furnishings as it had once possessed had long since been smashed up or carried off. Even the bit of attempted orchard behind its battered shelter of stone wall looked desolate enough. Many of the fig and olive trees were dead. The sand had drifted over the crumbling wall, and thorny brambles invaded what had once been meant for flower-beds.

Yet to Lisa the place had come to seem a sort of refuge. At the gypsy camp there was always some kind of excitement:—a continual, good-natured, inconsequent chatter among the women; a horde of restless, mischievous children up to all sorts of tricks, and the dogs. . . .

It was one raw and foggy afternoon, when the brief southern winter was fast creeping on, that the old woman, all crippled up with rheumatism, sat huddled on the cold hearth shivering and complaining. A penetrating sea fog was rolling in. Lisa decided she would build a fire in the dilapidated chimneyplace. She went out into the orchard, gathered wood; returned and soon had a little blaze started.

Suddenly Mamá Soledad, roused by the warmth looked up,—gave a hoarse croak and began to beat out the flames with her hands. . . .

"*Pani! pani!*" she shrieked.

Lisa, frightened at she did not know what, ran for water and they soon had the fire out.

Mamá Soledad on her knees then began carefully to brush back the wet ashes. . . . She pried with clawlike fingers at a loosened stone. The stone gave. . . . She slipped her hand underneath. . . .

What she brought out was a man's gold watch,—handsome, rather heavily old-fashioned and ornate. The trembling fingers held it close to the haggard old face, —staring, staring, with sightless eyes. . . .

She turned to Lisa as if she wanted to say something, —gave her the watch. . . .

"What is it? what is it?" Lisa insisted. There was a monogram she could not make out,—except that one of the letters might be an L or an S, and one she was sure was an R. The catch was evidently defective; for as she turned the watch, it opened in her hand:—

Fitted into the case was a miniature photograph,—two heads, lovingly close, that of a young girl and a little child. . . . Yellow with time, dim and stained with sea-water, Lisa's first confused impression was that it was her own picture she was looking down at. . . . But the hair was arranged differently,—the eyes were not the same. . . . The dress was of a fashion of some twenty years before.

"*Mi madre!*" Lisa cried and seized Mamá Soledad by the arm and began to shake her:—"Tell me! Tell me where you got this!"

It was useless. . . . Whatever the old woman had wanted to tell was gone. . . . All she could do now was to whimper and tremble, muttering rambling excuses:—

"Eh! There's always somebody ready to blame the *gitanos*. . . . *Dios mío!* are we to go without our fires in the fog? And if the sea brings us a present now and then,—that's robbery, too, is it?"

Her voice rose. She began to wring her hands and moan:—"My little goldfinch! My little gypsy songbird! Never, never any more that voice. . . . A dead face on the sands. . . . *Ay! ay de mi!*"

Lisa, thoroughly frightened, had all she could do to get the old woman on her feet and back to the encampment. . . .

Late into the night her delirium increased. She continued to moan and cry out, tossing about on her bed:—

"False lights! false lights in the storm! A dead face on the sands. . . . All, all lost but the little one. . . . We hid her and they said I had brought a curse. *Soledad* became my name!"

By this time the tent was crowded. Word had spread that old Soledad was passing. . . . Men and women pushed in, swayed back again. No one wanted to approach too close:—

"Twenty dollars. . . . Who says I sold her? I called to her out of the darkness,—and she came. . . . Wicked have I been!"

Her voice rose shrilly. For months unable to hold herself erect, suddenly she rose. . . . Shaking the grizzled locks from her blind and bloodshot eyes she towered in the flickering fireglow:—

"*Piedad! piedad! Yo me arrepiento!*"

She crashed down like a fallen tree. It was the end.

Next morning they carried her to burial in the old orchard back of the ruined ranch-house. . . .

"She's gone now," Lisa said that evening to Sylvestre. "Why can't you tell me what *she* wanted to tell?"

He looked at her uncomfortably; but would answer nothing. The other gypsies were equally close-mouthed. So Lisa, who had her own share of secretiveness, asked no more questions; but sewed the watch into the hem of her skirt for safe-keeping. . . .

With December came the rains,—early that year. There was much cold and discomfort even among the gypsies, accustomed as they were to an open-air life in all sorts of weather. To Lisa the gray sea mists, the smoky tent, the coarse monotonous fare, meant actual misery. She was no longer up to wandering. Day after day she sat shivering with huddled knees,—staring at the fire. Into her dark eyes had come a look of strain, of dumb suffering and apprehension.

The gypsy women with rough kindness tried to encourage her:—

"God's Mother! You're not the first. . . . Look at Señora Cabrera over there,—thirteen and another on the way. . . . Women must bear. Cry to-day and laugh to-morrow,—the *niñito* at breast. . . ."

Only Morella remained aloof, darkly jealous and hostile. Her baby had come stillborn. The second day she was up and about as usual, chopping wood, carrying water. The attentions Lisa received evidently angered her.

One evening when Sylvestre came in with some fish

he had caught,—cleaned them and cooked them on the hot coals, Morella stood by, watching scornfully:—

"*Bueno!* Everything for *la Reina*. . . . Me,—I'd rather lose my *muchacho* and have a *rom* of my own than get the finest baby in the world,—and no father for it!"

Lisa, who had been about to help herself to fish, sprang up. One or two started to laugh; but seeing Sylvestre turn on Morella thought better of it.

"*You*,—a *rom* of your own! A fine *rom* you've got! A mongrel,—no true Romano at all. . . ." There can be no greater contempt than that felt by the true gypsy for the half-caste; and it was generally whispered Secundio was of mixed blood. . . . "Little pock-marked, bandy-legged he-toad, I wouldn't step out of the road to keep from squashing. . . . A *rom* of your own,—a fine *rom*. . . . And fine he treats you!"

But Morella had fled. Lisa also had disappeared into her tent where later Sylvestre came to her.

"Sister, there's something I've been thinking about this good while," he began. "Just listen to what I've got to say to you,—and don't make no answer till I finish. . . ."

As if embarrassed he broke off, glanced swiftly away and then back again:—"Well, here it is,—my proposition. You don't have to stay here, if you don't want. . . . I've got some money put by." Sylvestre was a clever sort of chap and, for a gypsy, thrifty when he did not gamble. "There's my boat. Just say the word and I'll take you over to Santiago,—where you can

have doctors and all that sort of thing. Now wait a moment. . . ."

For Lisa with a queer scared look was trying to smile at him and shaking her head. . . .

"I told you not to answer till I finished. . . ." Again he hesitated. What he had to say did not come easily.

"*Bueno*,—this is it. . . . You know I've always called you 'sister'. . . . That's our way. But if you'd feel any more comfortable having a *rom* of your own,—seeing what's coming on you. . . . *The devil!*"

She had started up, was staring at him with wide incredulous eyes.

"Listen, sister,—before you say anything. . . . We could go to the *padre* at Santiago if that's your wish,—or take hands in true Romano style before our own. . . . There couldn't be no more talk then." He breathed heavily, flushed under his tawny skin. . . .

"What I mean is—you'd get a father for the *muchacho* and. . . ."

"*Sylvestre!* How *good* you are. . . ."

"Me,—good?" Unaffectedly he gaped at her. Many names had he been called in his life,—but never *that* before. . . .

Then with a flash of dark eyes, a growing husky eagerness. . . .

"We could do it all right. I've let you think you was my blood sister, so I'd get the better right to take care of you. . . . Any of the pals will bear me out in that. . . . But here's the straight of it. . . ." He lowered his voice:—"She married twice. The first time to

a señor. . . . What could it bring but bad luck? Then when he went away and bought the young one from her, as they tell, and she heard he had another señora,—she got her another man from among our own. Some wouldn't have taken her. He did. . . ." He shook his head darkly. "Better not talk of it. . . . Well, you see, we're cousins;—and that's all. Ask any of the pals. Now, then, if you want a *rom.* . . ."

"Sylvestre,—oh *no!* I couldn't! But you are good. . . ."

He spat and turned away. For one moment he had believed she was going to consent. Yet he would not press her:—

"And you don't want me to take you to Santiago?"

"No,—no. . . ."

"Well,—never mind. . . . It's all to be as you say. And, sister, if you'll just forget what I've told you. . . ."

Lisa almost did come to forget,—for that night her pains came on her. She had never known physical suffering before. She had never known illness, except as a child when she had lain dulled and stupid with fever. . . .

In the distraction and wrack of her torture she thought she was again on the narrow ledge of rock with Michael, amid wild mounting tempest and black devouring seas. Billow after billow beat over her,—dragging and clutching. Between the waves came the lightning,—a fiery stabbing sword. . . . What was Michael's strength to hold her back?

She gasped and strangled,—fighting, fighting for

breath. . . . Hour after hour she struggled, till she had no more strength. The waves had conquered;—had torn her from Michael's arms. . . .

She was alone,—alone in her desolation . . . drifting to gray oblivion. Why should she care? What was there in life to hold her back?

She seemed now to have floated into a hollow place of silence, where there was only one thought,—faint and dim. . . .

Michael had said that God was part of the very love they felt in their own hearts. . . .

Her dying vision cleared. As in a dream she could see the red glow of the fire; the dark faces of the gypsy women,—bending over her, drawing back. . . . She could hear the sound of their voices, and the distant lulling murmur of the sea. . . .

Through the lifted flap of the tent was night and a star. . . . How it sparkled and flamed,—like the pure light of an altar candle. Her mother lived among the stars with God. . . . To float away from life and all life's pain. . . .

But breaking through the hollow place came a cry;—a shrill protesting little cry, bereft and piteous. . . . Lisa on her bed of dry cedar branches and old sail-cloth smiled.

They had put her baby in her arms.

## CHAPTER XIII

### OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TATCHO ROMANO AND MONGREL

LISA had never thought of loving her baby. But he was so little,—so utterly, so incredibly her own! His tiny hands were like curled rose-petals. His sleek little dark head as round and smooth as a seal's.

Never in her life before had Lisa had anything she must take care of. To her baby she was shelter, nurture, warmth. . . . For three days she kept him close to her heart;—and the third day he died.

They thought at first her grief would kill her. The gypsy women could not understand her dumb and frozen state,—that neither wept nor cried out. She would not speak of the child; had no explanation for his sudden illness. There was need for explanation. Strong and lively in the morning,—stricken and as good as gone by night. . . .

A whisper passed from lip to lip. Dark looks were thrown at Morella. Everybody knew how she hated Lisa. Several recalled having seen her come and stand in the raised flap of the tent,—staring down at the baby. . . . Fits were fits. . . . But,—Holy Mother of God! . . . to look at a child with a look like that!

Lisa scattered their suspicions with a sharply tragic cry:—

"No! no! Morella was thinking of her own. . . . Oh, don't talk of it. . . . If you will have a reason,—it is *here!*" She pressed her hands against her bosom.

They did not understand; and because they did not it frightened them. They were kind and they were sorry; but they began to let her alone.

The old orchard bloomed that spring with poppies and wild mustard. The brambles turned to garlands, a spicy, snowy drift flung over the broken wall. It was behind the ruined ranch-house the gypsies had buried the baby beside old Soledad. . . . A bare and tiny grave next that other untended grave. . . .

Here as Lisa's strength returned she would walk,—back and forth, back and forth, all day long,—under the greening fig trees. It was terrible for her to feel she was growing strong again. She could not understand why she must go on living. . . . For those three dreamlike days when she held her baby in her arms there had seemed a new wonder, a new reason in life. . . . Because she was not good enough,—did her baby have to die?

Sorrow and rebellion shook her like a storm. Who had there ever been to teach her what was good, what was bad? She had not thought of harming anybody;—all she had thought of was to be happy! Suddenly it burst on her,—had not her baby died, he, too, must have suffered . . . must have grown up to feel that she *had* harmed him! However disproportionate the consequences, there was no escaping her sense of guilt,—

her sense of accusation. . . . Whereas in the old days Lisa had blamed Philip, it was now herself that she blamed.

Gradually, out of her anguish, she had come to understand that by giving herself lightly to a man she did not love, she had blasphemed against love. Life's sacred mysteries she had played with and thrown away. . . . She had lost Michael,—she had lost her baby. . . . Walking under the fig trees she would wring her hands and moan. But the tears never came. . . .

The gypsy women shook their heads. It could only lead to madness,—a grief like that.

Sylvestre, at his wits' ends, asked Señora Cabrera, her fourteenth in her arms:—

"Well then, you ought to know. What is there we can do? Anything you say. It don't matter what it costs. . . ."

The Señora shifted her *muchacho* to her hip. It was time he learned to use his own back.

"Why, little brother, it's no natural state,—that way of taking on. Never seen nothing like it before. It's not a case for herb teas nor physic. Anyway, can't get her to touch nothing like that."

She helped herself from the tobacco-pouch he held out.

"I've got a book in there," with a nod toward the disorderly interior of her stained and ragged tent:—"It's a good book and a powerful one, they do say. Belonged to my mother's mother, who knew two church prayers and the first ten letters of the alphabet. Never died at all, the old one;—just wandered off into the

mountains and that was the last seen of her. . . . Too much learning. . . .

"Be still, you little devil, if you don't want your mouth smacked. . . .

"*Bueno*,—we *Romano gente* ain't supposed to know much of that sort of thing. As for me, all the religion I've ever picked up was here and there by the roadside,—from the singing of the birds, or the blooming of the flowers,—as you might say. And then,—there's the stars. . . . It may be the Blessed Ones don't even understand our kind of talk;—any more than I understand the talk of the *padres* in the churches. . . . Patter, patter, patter, like so many drops of rain. I'm not saying what you pay for ain't the surest. . . .

"Well, it's a powerful book,—and there's a picture. If you want to take and hide it in her bed, where she'll rest her head on it. . . . I don't promise nothing;—but that's the best I know for driving out black thoughts. . . ."

Sylvestre listened with respectful attention. He himself could not read a word, any more than could the Señora. To both this only made the virtue of the book appeal more strongly.

Passing into her tent the gypsy rummaged in the family treasure box. Returning a few moments later she handed him a sadly worn and dilapidated Mexican mass-book. The cover was loose, several of the pages were missing. It was held together by a shoestring. Sylvestre received it from her with grave respect. When she untied the shoestring and showed him a decorated flyleaf,—the Virgin with the Holy Babe in her arms,

surrounded by a border of wreathed flowers,—he crossed himself. If anything could help, this surely ought. That same evening he hid the book in Lisa's tent amid the dry cedar branches under the strip of old sailcloth that served her for a bed.

She did not find it for a day or two. When she did she asked no questions. Because she had seen no book for many months, because any book seemed a refuge from the restless, reiterative misery of her own thoughts, she took it with her to the orchard.

Of a temperament susceptible to outward forms and symbols, Lisa, had she been sent to a convent school, would have made a good Catholic;—which might or mightn't have changed things.

The old mass-book with its rhythmic repetitions, the tattered flyleaf, wreathed in flowers, brought a strange stirring of comfort. At first Lisa read only to distract herself; but little by little the compelling power of reiterative suggestion assumed a sort of automatic control over her mind:—

"*Oh Virgen María! madre dolorosa, más afligida que todas las madres del mundo. . . .*"

Throughout all Mexico, at all hours of the day and night, thousands knelt and prayed at that mild shrine: —"*Oh Virgen María! madre de pecadores. . . .*" Even in the crude colors of the flyleaf, how tenderly she held her child!

Lisa's vision swam. . . . The picture wavered, magnified itself,—seemed to rise and float. . . .

There was a fragrance. . . . A bright and breathless stillness. . . .

For one moment only, through healing tears, Lisa looked up into the face of her own lost baby. . . . It was the Child in the picture,—and yet it was her child!

The grave was not the end!

Something in her frozen heart seemed to melt and break. With a strangled sob Lisa dropped her head on the forlorn old book. . . .

When at last she looked up from her weeping, it was as if she had taken off dark glasses. Wild sunflowers had followed the poppies and mustard in the old orchard. A little white kid sucked its mother,—the two half hidden in the coarse sedgy grass. The revivified green of the fig trees, the silvery shimmer of olive-leaves glittered against a cloudless sky. Over the shining stretches of the sea behind crossed bars of light like flaming spears, dropped the sun. . . .

Slowly Lisa rose to her feet. In a bewildering flash came the thought:—"I must be good!"

Always simple in her mental processes, this new resolve appeared to herself more than half a revelation.

With nothing of her own left to love or care for, she must go on loving. What the heart clings to it cannot utterly lose. For love is stronger than death,—even as the spirit is stronger than the body. Only through love could she be drawn up to God, where, after years and years, oh, *muchos, muchos años* (surely the hope was a prayer!), she might again find herself one with Michael,—with her lost baby. . . .

It was a day or two after this that Señora Cabrera got a fright. She heard Lisa laugh!

The gypsy woman beckoned Sylvestre. Together they stole to the door of the tent.

Inside Lisa had corraled seven of the little Cabreras. Evidently she had been planning to wash them. The children didn't want to be washed. Mischievous as always, one boy had seized the bucket;—was frisking about with it, squealing, splashing everybody. All the others were dodging here and there, tumbling over each other, shrieking with laughter. Lisa, almost as much excited as the children, laughed, too; till the baby asleep at the far end of the tent began to cry. Then she went to him, took him up. Soon he was crowing, snatching at her hair as she danced him in her arms. Unexpectedly Lisa made a dive for the bucket. There was enough water left to wash the baby;—and he was too little to run away!

"*Bueno,*—you don't have to worry any more." Señora Cabrera turned to Sylvestre,—patted him on the shoulder. "Once a señora who has lost her own takes another's in her arms, it's all right. . . . Just the same, too much water is no good. She wanted hers washed every morning! We all know what came of that. But I wouldn't stop her to-day," the dark weather-worn face softened almost to a look of beauty: —"not if she wanted to drown the whole litter! I told you, brother, that was a powerful book. . . ."

With the first days of early spring all was bustle and preparation in the gypsy camp. The women were busy putting the finishing touches to their reed baskets and

cages. From daybreak to dusk Sylvestre's lively whistle could be heard above the piping of the finches.

In the old days the gypsies had trapped their own birds. Of recent years it had become the custom to buy a few good singers in the fall, and bring them to the island to train them through the winter.

As the women finished their work, the finches and *periquitos* were transferred to the little wicker cages from the large central breeding-cage. This big cage was built about a stunted live-oak with lopped limbs that stood in the middle of the clearing round which the tents were scattered.

Seconding Sylvestre's whistle and the chorus of the goldfinches rose the strains of Secundio's fiddle. That was the one thing he did well. To play the fiddle was as natural to him as to the birds their song. Whatever the girls were doing, once Secundio began to play they would throw down their work,—chase each other about, dancing and singing. Morella's pretty little fourteen-year-old sister Toña was one of the wildest. . . .

"Come along, you also!" Secundio invited Lisa, who stood by watching. "You're none too old for dancing. . . . No heavy-foot, like my family cow!"

But Lisa turned away sadly without any answer. She felt she would never want to dance again.

Though she had long since learned the uselessness of asking questions, there was one practical everyday matter that puzzled her. How was it with a fortune under their very hands in hides and dried meat the gypsies continued to pick up a precarious and vagabond living,

peddling their birds, fiddling and fortune-telling at country fairs and seaside resorts?

One night when they were seated by the camp-fire she put it to Sylvestre:—

"All these goats,—why, they're not doing any good to anyone. There's wool, and hides, and meat. . . . Thousands and thousands of dollars going to waste every year. . . ."

"*Hermana*, that's as may be. But it wasn't in the agreement; and we live according to our word. The Señor gave us certain rights on this island,—to them we hold. *Valgame Dios!*" Even in the dancing fire-glow she could see how his face darkened:—"The gypsy has few rights enough. . . . Move on! move on! If they want us to move on from here,—let them come try it. . . ."

"Then you have permission to live on the Island?"

"We have permission to live on the Island, to fish in the bay, and get water from the cedar spring. You know we kill a goat now and then—when meat is necessary. But we make no traffic out of it. . . . Many years ago was the agreement made. Does a man wear out his word, as he wears out the coat on his back? Christ's blood! We've held to our end of the contract. *El Señor* shall never find himself one *centavo* the poorer for what he promised us. . . . If there are others who think they have a better right here,—let them come fight for it!"

Lisa smiled to herself. Sylvestre, who hadn't a scruple against picking the pockets or burning the barns of any against whom he considered himself to have a

grudge, would go hungry and ragged before he would overstep the conditions made with a vanished friend. She understood. . . . However much she might resent the imputation of gypsy blood, there were ways in which Lisa *thought* like a gypsy.

Secundio had always been an unlucky sort of chap. Short, squat, heavy-built for his race, he possessed little of that quick tact and ready magnetism that is the gypsies' chief capital. The one thing he did well was to fiddle; and he was too lazy and good-for-nothing to bring in anything much even at that. Only Morella and her gift at *la buenaventura* kept the family up. When Secundio did attempt business on his own account it was sure to be some dirty underhand trick a *tatcho Romano* would have despised. . . . There was more disgust than surprise, then, when he came limping up the beach one evening just past twilight,—a bullet-hole through the leg,—caught (had he ever been known to put anything over?) smuggling hides!

A brush with the customs-guards was the last thing to be desired! In the past seasons of drought, of sparseness, the gypsies had held their best title to their camping-ground. Now, with green headlands, with the stock on the increase, with a promise of sure profits ahead, the tribe had received more than one hint of the plans of certain powerful commercial interests touching "Goat Island."

A half-century-old verbal agreement made with a refugee land-owner,—what court would consider it? What court ever took the word of a gypsy! The most

likely result of Secundio's mishap was a boat-load of soldiers,—a volley of buckshot. . . .

To bend is better than to break. According to approved Romáño tactics it seemed desirable, at least temporarily, to evacuate the island. The move was entirely in order;—with spring came the trail northward. . . . They would strike their tents. Men, women and children, the entire horde,—some thirty in all,—take to the boats. . . . A month or two of wandering, and back they would drift in small parties, casually, unostentatiously. . . . Even had the island come under control of the new management, it was more than probable they would be able to resume their winter quarters unquestioned. Sea-gulls or *gitanos*, big business wasn't likely to notice much,—if the trick were managed right.

For a proper send-off there was to be a feast:—goats were killed, fish were caught, squirrels and rabbits. The usual *frijoles* and *tortillas* with quantities of red hot chile made ready. For two days the women were at it, cooking things up, either on improvised spits turned over glowing coals, in bubbling kettles, or roasted in a pit covered over with hot ashes and stones. Lisa, Toña, some of the Cabrera boys, went out to gather blackberries. Señora Cabrera had promised some of her celebrated little sweet cakes.

While the women and girls busied themselves over the camp-fires, the men were down on the beach working at the boats. Every rickety old tub was pulled in, examined for leaks. Amid the noise of the hammers, the clatter of women, the children ran and screamed.

The third day everything was ready. By mid-after-

noon the gypsies began to assemble, seating themselves in small parties here and there in the open space that surrounded the now empty central breeding-cage;—all the canaries and *periquitos* having been already transferred.

There was a great deal of joking and good-natured horseplay. Everybody ate with gusto. *Pulque* and *aguardiente* went the rounds. By evening the fires began to blossom out like red flowers. Then came story-telling, singing, dancing. . . . Secundio, more than half-seas over, forgetting his sullen grievance, played like the devil himself!

The men shot off their guns. The girls shrieked. The dogs barked. Hour after hour they kept it up;—laughing, whirling, gesticulating. . . . The rhythmic pat of their feet was in itself an invitation. . . . Where one dropped out another joined in,—with a zest, a careless vivacity, a spontaneous abandonment to pleasure that knew neither fatigue nor thought of the morrow.

The stars were dimming in the sky when the party dispersed. A brief hour's sleep. With sunrise they must be up again and off. . . .

A salvo of shots shattered the silence. . . . A terrified shriek of a woman. . . . Shouts, oaths, the scream of a child. . . . More shots,—the groan of a man in death agony. . . .

Caught asleep, unarmed, the gypsies made no attempt at defense. Running, leaping, falling in the half-light, taking advantage of every rock and gully, they scattered like so many rabbits. The one thought was to make

the boats, moored and waiting since the afternoon before at the mouth of the salt-water creek.

As far as that was concerned, there was no reason why they should not have been allowed to go openly. The only order received by the military had been to clear the island. But to the Mexican his own idea of sport. . . . Something bobbing back of those rocks yonder? *Bueno!* Good shot! . . .

Sylvestre and Lisa were first to reach the boats. Sylvestre's little dory, lightest and swiftest of the gypsy fleet, headed the line,—since he had been chosen leader of the morning's debarkation.

Now it was every man for himself. Wading into the creek he drew in the boat, steadying it for Lisa. Severing the moorings with one stroke of the knife, he himself was about to leap in,—when running, struggling through the long wet grass, appeared Morella and Toña. They had Secundio between them;—were half dragging him along,—he cursing, stumbling, retarded by his lameness.

"*Ándale! Ándale!*" Sylvestre stood one foot on the edge of the boat. . . .

Already Lisa had unshipped the oars.

The two girls, panting, breathless, put up a last despairing spurt. In a moment they were over the side;—Secundio floundering after. . . . Awkwardly enough he missed his grip,—slipped and rolled back into the swampy grass. . . .

Sylvestre leaned over to give him a hand. As the two regained their equilibrium Secundio happened to glance over his shoulder. At the same moment he

ducked,—managed somehow to shove himself between Sylvestre and the boat. . . .

There was the crack of a rifle. . . . A queer choking gasp. . . .

Sylvestre straightened,—both hands clutched at his breast. . . . He wavered, seemed to step back; then doubled over and sank out of sight among the rushes. . . .

Secundio was now in the boat. Coolly Morella pushed off.

"Wait! wait!" Lisa sprang to her feet.

"Down, you fool!" Secundio gripped her. . . . She turned, tried desperately to free herself. . . .

With a bludgeonlike blow he struck her full in the face; threw her to the bottom of the boat and put his foot on her neck. . . .

Morella, bending to the oars, laughed.

At the little fishing village where they had sold Sylvestre's boat, they had bought a tent and a donkey. Then, instead of waiting for the others and taking the accustomed route north to the border, they made for the Colorado River and struck across into Sonora. No one but outcasts would have chosen that desert trail. . . .

Camping and wandering, wandering and camping, they worked their way gradually west toward Cananea and the mines. Early in the fall Morella's baby had been born. The following afternoon they were on their way again. But the baby was sickly from the first. It made travelling difficult. So they decided to stop over for

a while and give him a chance to get strong. Most of Secundio's time was spent drinking in the *cantinas* of the wretched little adjacent settlement. Some days he would take Lisa and Toña with him to dance and tell fortunes; but more often they tramped the country from ranch-house to ranch-house, begging, peddling their little baskets. Anything to bring in a few pennies. If they came home without the pennies, Secundio beat them with his heavy walking-stick while Morella stood by and laughed. Many a night had Lisa gone to bed, bruised, black-and-blue, aching in every bone. She hated herself for being so afraid of Secundio. She had come to cower if he looked at her,—to tremble at the sound of his voice.

There was no limit to the degradation he would force on her. She was made to lie, to beg, to steal. At first she had told him that she could not dance. The low *cantina*, reeking with smoke, the evil faces of the men, sickened her. But Secundio knew a cure for that kind of foolishness. After refusing once, she never refused again!

Standing, her back against the wall, she would wait his signal. He did not have to speak; but summoned her with a motion of his bow. Sometimes Toña danced, too. Both girls kept their eyes fixed on Secundio. He not only played for them; but actually conducted them, —as a first violin conducts the other instruments. It was not easy to satisfy him. An angry jerk of the head would send Toña back to her station against the wall. Then Lisa danced on alone. And, strangely, once she had begun to dance, the old delight repossessed her.

She was no longer frightened, no longer quelled. It seemed to Lisa dancing, as if she herself shook music from her limbs,—as a flower swaying in the wind shakes perfume from its petals. . . .

Sometimes it happened after the dance a man would try to brush acquaintance. Then Lisa must drink with him; must listen to his love-making; tell his fortune, perhaps; take his money,—and slip away as best she could. . . . "Get what you can, and don't give anything in return." Those were Secundio's instructions. In that one respect his tyranny proved a sort of rough protection. Everybody was afraid of the evil-looking gypsy with his ugly stick.

Perhaps, had she been nothing but that which she appeared to be, Lisa would before this have given her companions the slip and struck off for herself. It had been her timidity that had held her back. Indeed, a true *gitana* might have hesitated to trust herself alone, to the road in Mexico those days. After four years of bloodshot, kaleidoscopic revolutionary changes, any name—Villa, Obregon, Carranza—was good enough to conjure loot with. Sonora, less harried than its sister state, had still its share of scattered "rebel" bands and glorious "*de facto*" heroes. As between the boa constrictor and the Bengal tiger, "wis was wis" did not seem to matter much to the victims. So that even the cruelty of Secundio's beatings, Morella's malignant triumph, had in a way been protection.

But now with Secundio's odious drunken love-making, with Morella's snakelike jealousy aroused, the situation

was impregnated with a new danger. Lisa felt it in every quivering fiber. . . .

She must get away. She must get away,—before "anything happened!"

The one ray of light that glimmered through the blackness of her befogged and weary misery as she lay that night in the mouth of the sandy wash, tortured for water, yet afraid to move or stir from her hiding-hole, was the thought that in the morning they would be going on to Cerro Gordo. The K. C. Cattle Company was having a round-up there—and the big K. C. was an American outfit! Oh, the good Americans! In the last few months of degraded wretchedness, Lisa's thoughts even toward Philip had softened. . . . To-morrow at the round-up there must surely come a chance! If only something did not happen first. . . .

Suddenly Lisa began to shake and tremble. Between her and the starlit sky had loomed a shadow. It was creeping closer. . . . It blocked the mouth of the shelter. . . .

"Sister,—are you awake!" Toña, warm and friendly, squatted by her side. . . . "Oh, sister,—he didn't beat you?"

"No, *hermanita*. . . ."

"Are you hungry? I've brought you some milk. . . ."

"Thanks, dear. . . ."

"Oh, sister," a bubble of stifled childish laughter:—"you ought to have been there! Such fun! I'd just chosen my *vaca* and driven her down the bank behind some bushes when along comes the *hombre*. . . . An old, old man—blind as an owl. He called and he tramped

about. And there I sat, milking so nicely into my little bucket! When I finished, I gave her a slap. Up she went! The old man swore at her,—but never saw she had been milked at all."

"Well, it's time to go to sleep, now. . . ."

"Yes, sister. . . ." Toña crept closer, snuggled down. "There are soldiers at Cerro Gordo; and *vaqueros* from all over the country will have ridden in to the round-up. . . . There's a grand *Americano* store they say. I have my *dinero* all safe. Two red hair-ribbons. . . . I'd give one to you;—but then, I have two braids, you see. . . ."

"I don't want the ribbon, *hermanita. Chito!* go to sleep. . . ."

Next morning they made an early start. The air was light and sparkling. The sunlight seemed actually to gild the dun road, the gray hills. Birds twittered and flashed in the chaparral. Gradually, as they progressed, the sage gave way to sparse rolling grass-lands, dotted here and there with juniper and *piñon.*

Lisa and Toña gathered juniper berries. They plaited them in their braids, and wove them into the horsehair chains from which their little baskets hung. Morella had nothing but sullen looks. With a black eye and a limp she lagged in the rear. The baby was sick as usual. Secundio with his fiddle swaggered on ahead, —now thwacking the sides of the lean little over-laden donkey, again taking a vicious cut at the dog. Never did he feel so important, so almost like a virtuous citizen, as after beating up one of his womenfolk. And, lazy as he was, he really enjoyed fiddling at a dance.

## CHAPTER XIV

### HOW MORELLA TOLD LA BUENAVENTURA

THE Kelly Cameron Cattle Company was a California concern with offices on the fifth floor of the Sierra Madre Bank building, Third and Main, Los Angeles. . . . A far cry, that, to the desolate sun-parched wind-swept ranges of northern Sonora! Yet from Capitan to Lobo, from Los Pinos to Mesa, it would have been hard to find any petty *jefe-político* too narrow-minded, any peon too sluggish, any Indian too benighted, not to take an interest,—likely and personal,— in the business policies of the big K. C.

There was a reason;—or rather there were several of them.

"Damn buzzards! I never did aim to be called a quitter. But I reckon you're doin' the only thing there is lef' to do, Mr. Kelly."

Big Bill Tobin, ranch foreman and range-boss, rose, stretched himself in the moonlight. Anybody who saw Big Bill stretch realized all over again what a giant of a fellow he really was, and couldn't but wonder a little at the gentle diffident drawl of him:—

"A man must have the guts of a worm to run cattle in Mexico these days. . . ." He lounged to the edge

of the gallery, stood looking across the intervening stretches of moon-drenched chaparral to the clustered lights of Cerro Gordo winking up out of the valley like little stars caught in an earthenware bowl:—"A fine country, too. As fine a cow country as anyone could wish,—barrin' the varmints that infest it. Mexicans, Yaquis, coyotes,—all the same breed at heart. . . ."

"Do they realize yet what I'm down here for?"

Charles Kelly's voice had a clipped directness after the soft elisions of the big Texan.

"Who knows what a Mex knows? . . . But if they know, I don't see how they know. Reckon maybe so they're studyin' about it."

Kelly gave a short laugh,—struck a match, relit his cigar and seated himself on the top step of the gallery. Tobin, having rolled a cigarette, sat down beside him.

For a while the two men smoked in silence. The thing all the boys liked about young Kelly was his companionableness. It wasn't a pose with him, either, as it is with the sons of some big cowmen. As a youngster, Charles had spent most of his vacations on the range, and always with the explicit understanding,—orders from "the old man" himself,—that he was to be treated like any other hand. More than once Big Bill had had to call the boy down for some piece of youthful "freshness," of reckless daredeviltry. Both men found it pleasant to remember those days; and since neither presumed on the remembrance, the friendship between them was as deep-rooted as it was genuine.

"Good Lord, Tobin! . . . When I think of all the old man has put into this God-forsaken country. . . ."

The ashy tip of Charles' cigar glowed to sudden fiery intensity:—"it makes me *hot!* I never aimed to be called a quitter, either. But there's nothing else we *can* do. . . . He's taken two trips to Washington. They won't listen to anything and they don't want to understand anything that doesn't fit in with their own theories. . . . Maybe something will develop twenty years from now from all this 'watchful-waiting' conference business. . . . All I know is, a year more of present conditions will break the strongest of us. . . . Why,—there's been enough beef stolen from this outfit alone in the last twelve-month,—to feed Belgium! And we don't even save the hides. . . . Add to that, taxes and levies. . . ."

"I reckon you've found the only way out, Mr. Kelly. . . ."

"Yes, for us there is this way. But for the little man,—the man nobody ever hears anything about. . . ."

"Like Tod Hunter for instance. . . ."

"Poor devil! I always liked Tod. He was wagon-boss that first year I went with the outfit up on the Bonita. . . ."

"Yes, sir,—nice quiet feller. . . . Married ol' man Smedley's girl over Cananea way. Pretty little woman,—and two of the finest kids. Up to three years ago Tod was doin' well. . . . But you wouldn't have found much to recognize him by, Mr. Kelly,—the day we brought the body in. . . . What kinder knocked me out,—it happened to be one o' the kids' birthdays. Mrs. Hunter she'd baked a cake. . . . They done some watchful waitin' themselves, I reckon. Anyway, about sun-

down when Tod didn't come, off they set to look for him. You know how it is on lots of these little ranches,—only her and him and the two kids. . . . When they *did* find him, Mrs. Hunter said, all she could think of was keepin' the coyotes off. Big feller like that,—what else was there they could do? So there they sat with their little fire. . . . And there we came on them in the mornin'. . . . Not a hoof left in the pasture. . . ."

" 'Yaquis?' "

" 'Yaquis'—yes, sir. . . . Of course. . . . Same brand, I reckon, as raided our horse-camp last winter, just about the time the Constitutionalists happened to be needin' cavalry mounts so bad. . . ."

"Lo, the poor Indian! It seems he has his uses. Damn such a country, anyway! Well,—what I'm wondering is whether those chaps down yonder are on yet?" He nodded toward the lights in the valley. . . . "Catch the sound of the fiddle?"

"Oh, they'd be dancin,' Mr. Kelly. A *vaquero's got* to have his dance. Ten to one, some of our own boys have sneaked down. . . . You reckon there ain't going to be any trouble about inspection or permits?"

"There'll not be any trouble," young Kelly answered succinctly.

The foreman chuckled.

This was Saturday evening. The Wednesday preceding, out of a clear sky, unannounced and unexpected, even by Big Bill Tobin himself, Mr. Charles Kelly had ridden into Cerro Gordo at the head of his cowboy horde. . . . A hundred and fifty shouting, cheering gringos,—if there was one! Kelly, it would appear, had

picked up every foot-loose hand on his way over the border.

To this force was promptly added another fifty men, —local *vaqueros*, and the small independent *rancheros* of the vicinity. For three successive days the K. C. ranges and outlying country from Todos Santos cañon on to the Bonita, had been raked and combed.

Yet once the herds were gathered and driven into ranch headquarters at Cerro Gordo the local men found themselves let out. It wasn't just a matter of the fall branding, then?

Doubtless, as Big Bill Tobin opined, there were a good many people "studyin'" the problem. . . .

Faintly across the moon-drenched stretches of chaparral quavered the lilt of the fiddle.

"Well, sir," Tobin rose, shook himself:—"reckon I'd better ride down and round up any of our fellows that have managed to give old Saunders the slip. We'll be needin' all hands in the mornin'. . . ."

"Right you are," Kelly rose, too. He was a well-set-up young fellow,—personable in his easy-going ranchman's habiliments, flannel shirt, boots, spurs. Yet something in the look of the eye, the clipt enunciation, announced the up-to-date American business man. . . . "If Peters gets in with his bunch,—and I don't see why he shouldn't. . . ."

"It ain't necessary for you to come, Mr. Kelly."

"Bill, you old sea-serpent. . . . I believe what you're out after is a dance yourself! Hold on a minute. . . ." Charles stepped through the open door to the ranch

kitchen. When he came back he was buckling a belt under his loose coat.

Tobin smiled companionably. Like all the rest of the K. C. outfit, he packed his gun on his saddle. . . .

It made Morella furious to see Lisa dancing, the glistening rime of berries in her cloud-dusk hair. Like a bird, she was, free and joyous in her movements;—her grave young face, pale yet luminous; unconscious of the squalid heat and stench of the *cantina*, indifferent to the shouts of the dark-faced, swaying crowd of hawk-eyed men.

Who to look at her this evening would ever dream she had been tramping all day in the sun?

It was always so when Lisa danced. Her delight in her art was spontaneous, ineradicable,—a spirit that lived in her spirit. Something entirely independent of the conditions that surrounded her,—something independent of her own personality it almost seemed.

Floating, drifting, now slow, now fast, without effort or fatigue, weaving, gliding like captive moonlight, she followed the enchanted fantasies of Secundio's flying bow. . . .

Now and then some half-drunken *vaquero* threw a coin. Then Toña in her bright red ribbons would dart out and pick it up. . . . Lisa never stooped for the money.

The sight was like poison to Morella. Here she sat with a black eye, a game leg, a sick baby. . . . What good did it do for her to place herself near the door, her fortune-telling cards spread out before her? No

one gave her a look. Two years had she been respectably married, and all that had come of it was abuse, ill-treatment, neglect. Lisa, never married at all, far from respectable, was still—*la Reina!*

There was vitriol in the thought. . . .

A stir in the doorway, a jangle of spurs, attracted Morella's attention.

Two gringo gentlemen had drawn up in the street before the *cantina*, had swung from the saddle, were already on the threshold. It was the young Señor Charles Kelly and his big foreman. Morella had no trouble placing them.

A gypsy woman, especially a fortune-telling gypsy woman, is not two hours in any town before she has learned the names, the faces, picked up whatever other stray bits of information as are to be gathered about the chief notables of the place. . . .

"Señores! señores! I tell *la buenaventura.* By the hand or by the cards. . . ."

They did not even turn.

"Señores,—in the morning you go a journey. . . . But I see a little cloud. . . ."

Like all the others they pushed past Morella and stood to watch the dance.

"Extraordinary. . . . By Jove, Tobin! That girl could make her fortune on the stage. . . ."

Charles threw a coin.

For the first time Lisa darted forward. . . . People thought it was because the money was gold.

At the same moment, pushing through the crowd, strutted a spruce little Mexican captain. He had

crossed from the military barracks on the opposite side of the plaza just as the two gringos dismounted.

Now, shoving, elbowing his way to them, he tapped Charles insolently on the shoulder:—

"Señor, I understand you move your herds. There are certain formalities. . . ."

"I don't speak Spanish. You'll have to excuse me, captain."

Pretty good, that, for a man practically raised on the range, personally known to every *vaquero* within hearing! "Come on, Tobin. None of our boys here. . . ."

Insolence for insolence.

The little officer side-stepped, sputtered, and grimaced, as the huge Texan (inadvertently, of course!) landed a heavy foot on a too tightly booted military-toe. . . .

"*Maldito!*" The beady eyes shot spite. Then lighted to a look of surprised pleasure as they fell on the gypsy dance-girl with the frost of berries in her hair.

Lisa had broken off in the dance. Not even stooping to the gold at her feet (American gold at that!), she stood arrested. . . . Her body bent forward,—looking, looking, after the two gringos who had already disappeared into the street.

"Dirty swine!" The bantam captain straightened. Himself flung a coin:—"Come, my beauty. . . . No true *gitana* has eyes for gringo pigs. . . ."

The crowd had begun to shuffle and stamp,—to strike their hands together. They wanted another dance. . . .

Secundio motioned to Lisa with his bow.

As always, she obeyed. But this time it was mechanically. There was no spring, no vitality left in her movements. She must be tired, people thought.

As she danced the bantam stood making eyes at her. He smirked and winked,—twirled his little mustache.

After a round or two her arms fell to her sides. When the little officer threw a second coin, accompanied by the obvious signal that she was to follow him (with the usual conceit of his kind he supposed she had stopped dancing for no other purpose), she shrank away, hiding herself in the shadows back of Secundio. . . .

Already a new dance was on,—a two-step in which everybody wanted to join.

"*Maldito!*" The disappointed bantam, feeling himself tricked, held up to ridicule for the second time that evening, elbows extended, jerked and jostled his way to the door.

"Captain! My little Captain! I tell *la buenaventura*. . . ."

He was passing without so much as a glance.

"My captain is lucky,—in love as in war. . . . (*You desire that girl?*)" The last words were more a motion of the lips than a sound.

The officer stopped, stretched his open palm across the table. The gypsy bent to it:—

"There is promotion in store for my captain. . . . (*How much?*)"

He made a quick gesture with the fingers of his free hand.

"And honorable wounds,—but a happy recovery. . . .

(*That is not enough. . . . She brings more dancing. . . .*)"

The sum was doubled.

"(*Bueno!*) Good fortune attends my little captain. (*We will pass the barracks,—she and I, in fifteen minutes. Have two of your men waiting in the shadow of the arch. . . .*)"

The soldier threw a coin on the table and passed out. Morella shuffled and spread her cards,—then sat back watching the dance. The expression in her eyes was entirely satisfied and cheerful.

After a while she beckoned Lisa:—"I see you're tired. We can go now,—us two. You've done pretty well tonight. . . ." Her tone was fawning and full of flattery. "We'll get to the tent ahead of the others and make some hot coffee. . . ."

Kelly and Tobin had made the rounds of the *cantinas* and extracted three grinning, shame-faced cowboys. Now the five of them clattered through town on their way back to the ranch.

The moonlight flooded everything. It shone on a dead cat in a stew of garbage in the gutter; on a spotted pig and a brown baby asleep together in an open doorway. It turned the bare and squalid makeshift of a plaza to a sea of living silver. It silhouetted for a brief instant the hurrying figures of two women just disappearing into the shadow flung by the entrance arch of the barracks at the corner. . . .

Charles could not get the thought of the gypsy dancegirl out of his head.

"Extraordinary!" he kept repeating to himself. At the best he was not blest with an abundant flow of adjectives; and to-night the very quality of his admiration limited them. "That was what she was,—extraordinary. . . ."

Again the lilt of the fiddle. . . .

How she had *danced!* Broadway would make a queen of her. . . . And she had looked at him. . . . Naturally,—all *gitanas* looked. But her eyes. . . . !

They were half way across the plaza. Just ahead of them like a black velvet cloak flung down in the moonlight lay the shadow of the archway. . . .

"*Help! help! oh, help!*"

For an instant the five Americans reined up. . . . Why did the cry ring so strangely? What made their hearts leap and race to it,—even as at the goad of the spur their horses leapt and raced. . . .

"*Help!*"

And they knew. . . . It was the voice, the language of one of their own!

A gush of scratching, scuffling undertones from the archway. . . .

"Steady, boys!"

Kelly plunged ahead of the others into that struggling shadowy confusion at the gate.

"Don't shoot! Don't shoot till I give the word. . . ."

For a moment the heavy clustering darkness put him at a disadvantage. He had clubbed his own revolver. But to attack might mean. . . .

She was fighting, fighting like a little wildcat. . . . He could make out now the delicate slender savagery of

her,—as she twisted and flung herself about. There were three men. He had thought at first there must be half a dozen. . . .

Freeing one foot Charles caught the nearest with a vicious kick under the chin. He stumbled,—dragged down his companions. . . .

With a leap the girl had disengaged herself. Charles felt her clutching hands at his stirrup. . . . God! she'd be trampled yet. . . .

He swung down towards her. . . . Caught her by the arms,—half jerked, half dragged her up. . . .

At the same moment the barracks door flung back. A rabble of soldiery tumbled and swarmed about them. . . .

"Blaze away, boys. . . . I've got her. . . !"

It was only their mounts that saved the Americans. Outnumbered twenty to one, they made a dash for it. And, fortunately, even across the moon-washed spaces of the plaza the Mexicans shot wild.

Free of the town they slackened their pace. The arms that had been clutching Kelly so frantically relaxed. He looked down to smile his reassurance;—and the smile turned to an incredulous gasp. For the girl in front of him was the gypsy dance-girl!

## CHAPTER XV

### THE GOOD AMERICANS

THAT night Lisa slept in a bed. A little white-painted iron bed with clean sheets, warm woolen blankets, and a blue sateen quilt with pink roses. . . .

Not that the K. C. was in the habit of providing sheets and sateen quilts for its cowpunchers. But this was ranch headquarters where Big Bill Tobin, after sixteen years' faithful service, ran things very much as he pleased.

In pre-revolutionary days two pretty Texas nieces had been in the habit of coming to spend part of every summer vacation with Bill on the ranch. Naturally, Charles had fallen in love with the prettier; but Bill with his usual *savoir faire* and easy tact had handled the affair so that there were neither hard feelings nor broken hearts. The prettier niece was now Mrs. Sandy McCabe, of Naco, Arizona, with two fine strapping boys,—to the eldest of which Charles had stood godfather.

Though, owing to the unsettled condition of the country, the nieces had made no visit to the ranch for over two years now, their room was always ready. There were pictures cut from the Sunday Art-Supplements on the walls, and a home-made dressing-table with a white enameled mirror over it.

So, when in answer to Charles's explosive:—

"What in the Name of God. . . ." (a Mexican *gitana* being the last solution any of them had expected to the riddle of the voice toward which they had leapt)—all Lisa seemed able to do was to repeat:—

"I am not a gypsy! Oh, I am not a gypsy!" till suddenly she fell to trembling and to crying. Big Bill out of his long experience with nieces knew just how to pat her on the back and say:—

"There, there, now. . . ."

Then turning to the astounded and deeply embarrassed Charles, whose hand Lisa had seized and was covering with her tears and her kisses. . . . (By this time they were on the ranch-house gallery and knew they were not being pursued):—

"All *she* wants is a chance to rest herself and wash up a bit. A good tea-kettle of hot water. . . ." (No cowpuncher who hadn't had experience in nieces could possibly have thought of a tea-kettle of hot water . . .) "And a night's sleep! Why,—she'll be as fresh as a daisy in the mornin'. . . ."

"And, oh! I have been to school. . . ." Lisa could not bear they should think her utterly a savage. "I won't make any trouble. I won't cry . . . any more. It was just,—just—*the sound of your voices. . . .*"

"There, there now!" said Big Bill.

When they led her to the room and she saw the little white bed with its blue sateen quilt and the dressing-table and the white mirror, she stood for a moment with clasped hands. Then slowly turned to the men in the door:—

"No, señores," the soft courteous Spanish syllables slipping unconsciously from her lips—"I am not a gypsy. But for more than a year I have lived with the gypsies. And to find myself among American gentlemen again. . . . Ah! It is impossible—you should understand. . . ."

The men in the doorway dropped their eyes. Then without saying anything at all, they turned and went away to give the little white bed and the kettle of hot water a chance.

Next morning, before the sky had begun to lighten even, Lisa heard them stirring. It was Charles who knocked at her door.

"Awfully sorry to disturb you. But—we're making an early start. . . ."

What Lisa never knew was that they had taken it turn about to watch on the gallery through the night. It wasn't likely the Mexicans would organize an attack on the ranch-house, since the Americans, all told, outnumbered the ragamuffin garrison at Cerro Gordo. Still, the bulk of the hands were on the mesa with the herd half a mile out. These days in Mexico one couldn't be too careful. So they put a light in the window for the express benefit of their friends below, and kept watch turn about on the gallery. . . .

Lisa dressed as rapidly as she could. Once dressed, however, she stood dissatisfied before the mirror.

"I do look like a gypsy," was her thought.

She unplaited her hair and tried to re-arrange it as she used to wear it at San Miguel, in a low knot at the nape of her neck. But with her sunburned face, her

*gitana* dress and necklace of little seashells, this was worse than ever. . . .

"Anybody would take me for a half-and-half! . . ."

She looked at the ring Michael had given her. It was all she had left out of the past;—that and the watch she had sewed into the hem of her skirt for safe-keeping. It no longer seemed possible she would ever read the secret of that teasing monogram; ever discover the reason why Mamá Soledad, destitute and in want, should have kept hidden all those years an article, which,—for the value of the gold alone,—she might have sold. . . . What Lisa chiefly felt was that in the watch with its dim water-stained picture, she held proof—tangible proof to herself, at least)—of those haunting memories of storm, of shipwreck. . . . Proof, she believed, that her mother had *not* been a gypsy!

She sighed a little. . . . Then why,—if her mother wasn't a gypsy,—should she, Lisa, have such gypsy-looking eyes? Sylvestre's claim to cousinship had almost passed out of her mind. She had never accepted it as anything more than his way of accounting for her presence on the Island;—a way that would leave them free to marry, and, if she wouldn't listen to that, would still give him the right to take care of her. . . .

Nothing to tell. . . . Nothing to show. . . . Nothing, nothing at all. Well,—she wasn't going to make up any story. It was wicked to make up stories,—unless you were forced to. Secundio's blackguardly subterfuges remained a memory of shame and loathing. . . .

She re-plaited her hair gypsy style.

Somehow the night in the little white bed with its

clean sheets, its blue sateen quilt, had made Lisa know all over again,—that she must be good!

She found a spray of juniper berries not too much broken, placed it in her braids and made her way out to the kitchen.

Charles met her in the door.

"The boys haven't finished breakfast yet," he said. "I'll fix you up right here in this corner. Awfully decent set of chaps."

The kitchen was a long room with a pine plank floor and a heavy raftered ceiling. Because the ceiling was low, the windows seemed to be set high. This morning they gave no light from the outside; but reflected back the yellow gleam of the kerosene lamps against the walls. Somehow the impression Lisa got as Charles piloted her down the room was one of warmth, and hurry, and intentness:—a crude sort of masculine comfort that thrilled and pricked to a subdued sense of purpose, of excitement. . . .

On benches either side of two long tables some sixty cowpunchers were shoveling in food. There is no known species of biped, barring perhaps the ostrich, that can dispose of its provender with more celerity and dispatch than the average American cowboy.

This first relay, keen with the hunger of youth after "last guard" on the mesa, made it a point of honor to polish off their plates, fling themselves aboard their waiting ponies, and tear back to the relief of their famished brethren with the herd.

Wong Lee, the bland, smiling-faced Chinese cook, and his two Mexican swampers shuttled back and forth be-

tween the tables and the glowing range opposite the gallery door. Crackling cedar wood, sizzling bacon, mingled their scent with the hot oily smell of the kerosene lamps and the still more penetrating aroma of boiling coffee.

Charles himself waited on Lisa, bringing her besides the bacon and coffee, breakfast food, a tin of evaporated milk, and absolutely the best hot biscuit she had ever eaten in her life.

"Hope you slept well. . . . We're in an awful rush this morning."

Big Bill, turning from the wall-telephone over by the window, nodded his greeting:—

"Everything O. K., Mr. Kelly. Peters and his bunch just in sight, Saunders says. . . ."

As one man the boys still at table rose:—

"*Hi! yi! yi! Hi yi yi!*" They were out of the door. With the queer half-flying scramble of their kind they were into the saddle and off,—tearing like wildcats over the hill.

Big Bill was already on the gallery; Charles, starting to follow, turned for a moment to Lisa:—

"I must tell you, we're off for the border,—just as soon as we can get a start. Clearing out of here,—lock, stock and barrel. . . . I don't know what your plans may be . . ." Then hastily, to the lost, imploring terror in her eyes:—

"Why,—of course. . . . That's all right. We can fix you up with a mount. . . . You ride?"

"I used to ride, sometimes, señor,—at school. . . ."

Lisa did so want to account for herself,—to show some "background"!

By this time the second ravenous relay was dismounting in front. Fringed chaps, jangling spurs, wide sombreros, they entered. Naturally, these boys must have been curious about the pretty *gitana*, the story of whose rescue had by this time spread. But they were, as Charles had vouched for them, an awfully decent set. Beyond the inevitable sideways glance, a shy nod or smile here and there, they applied themselves strictly to the business in hand,—stoking up conscientiously for a long day in the saddle,—joshing a little among themselves; yet keen, set, alert, as if keyed to adventure. . . . So out and off again.

"I'll see you get something gentle." Charles, too, was gone.

Wong and his swampers now flung themselves on the deserted kitchen;—washing things up . . . packing things up. . . .

Lisa, of course, had nothing to pack. She slipped out to the gallery.

Already the herd must be under way. Above the first stirring twitter of the birds, through the cool misty reaches of the morning, came the cries of the cowboys, the lowing of the cattle.

She could see them now,—vague, swarming masses, hunching and huddling down the slopes from the mesa.

Tearing through the chaparral, whooping, swinging their ropes, the boys gradually worked them into long lurching lines that, skirting the town, would take the

trail where it wound up from Cerro Gordo northward over the plains. . . .

Trotting in from the corrals at the back came Big Bill Tobin, a bald-faced bay in tow.

"Up she goes,—like a bird!"

With a little gasp Lisa found herself in the saddle,—one hand clutching the horn, the other closing over the bunched bridle-reins. Fortunately, her skirt was a free, gathered affair.

"How about a hat?" Big Bill disappeared into the ranch-house, returning almost instantly with a light-colored Stetson and a pair of woman's fringed gauntlets that had belonged to one of the nieces.

The *tout ensemble* was incongruous enough. The hat in especial seemed to Lisa as uncomfortable as it was superfluous. The gloves cramped her hands. Yet nothing would have induced her to discard them. It was through such badges as these one proclaimed oneself "standardized. . . ."

And now came Charles, cantering back from the mesa where he had been superintending the get-away:—

"Given her old Baldy, I see. . . ." Then to Lisa:—"Steady as an old cow. Used to ladies. . . . All right;—we're off. . . ."

Through all their careful observation of detail, the keen yet somehow casual assurance with which they applied themselves to the work in hand, Lisa felt the same tense undercurrent she had noticed at the breakfast table;—the thrill and fillip of men keyed to adventure.

As they pulled out, a canvas-covered wagon and

trailer came rattling round from the corrals. The last thing Lisa saw was Wong and his assistants shuttling back and forth from the kitchen to the wagon;—trotting out their stuff, packing it up. . . .

Through misty seas of gray and pearl the sun shot suddenly over the plain. The gray deepened to azure; the pearl drifted and feathered out,—brightening to a floating fluff of cumuli. . . .

"Sound sleepers, our *amigos* down yonder!" Charles turned in the saddle to look back at the dull little 'dobe town. Adding, to Lisa:—

"Gypsies have a knack of hearing things. That fortune-telling young woman in the door of the *cantina* last night . . . what had she picked up about us? She tried to tell me. I didn't want to stop just then."

Lisa paled. Any memory of Secundio or Morella must be a memory of terror; and she had a pretty good idea by this time of Morella's treachery,—of the deliberate trap into which she had been led. It was a moment before she collected herself to answer:—

"Señor, they said that you desired to move your herds; but that you had overlooked certain preliminaries and the soldiers would not let you go. . . ."

Charles gave a short laugh.

"In this case 'the preliminaries' are to be attended to afterwards," he explained. "You understood they would try to stop us?"

"I do not think they will dare. You are too many. But they believed you could not go,—because you had overlooked the preliminaries."

The two men exchanged glances. Gypsies do not

usually talk of "preliminaries." Her English was perfect. . . . Yet the strange eyes of her? . . . the soft trailing lisp? . . .

Tobin attempted an experiment:—

"Darn rascals,—all *gitanos*. . . . Ready to steal, or lie, or turn their hands to any dirty trick. . . ."

"That is the world's opinion," she admitted with dignity. "But *gitanos* are like others,—good and bad. . . ."

So far they had asked no questions. Now Charles said—

"Señorita, you have not told us your name. . . ."

"My name is Elisa," she answered without hesitation. "Elisa Reyes."

She had decided on that as she stood before the mirror plaiting her hair. Sylvestre had offered his name to her. . . . She had a right to it. . . .

All morning they pushed the cattle along,—hard driving through a thirsty land. Sometimes Lisa rode with Tobin,—sometimes with Charles. Neither man had much to say. Both were alert, watchful, full of business. Yet for all their preoccupation, they managed to take care of her,—never to leave her alone.

The swirl of choking dust, the continual bellow and roar of the cattle, their red eyes and tossing horns, were quite terrifying to Lisa. When they lolled their tongues and panted, she believed it was through savageness. . . . Though she could have walked without effort, she was not used to riding and soon felt herself ready to sink with fatigue. But she made no complaint. Once or

twice they caught her looking at them,—her dark eyes eloquent with humble gratitude. . . .

It must have been somewhere about eleven o'clock that over the crest of a low hill to the east appeared a rider. He drew up;—was joined by another and yet another. . . . Till clustered there against the skyline a company of some seventy-five or eighty men were gathered.

Charles gave a sharp order. The hands closed in about the herd. All of them packed guns. There was no attempt to accelerate the pace. Grim, dogged, intent on the business in hand, the K. C. outfit held to its way. . . .

Probably the bandits,—as nondescript a band of ruffians as it is possible to imagine, mounted indiscriminately on horses, mules, burros; some in ragged uniforms that reflected the leadership of at least three revolutions, others with neither hats nor shoes, their heads tied up in handkerchiefs—their feet bound with sacking, —decided the Americans were more of a proposition than they cared to handle.

From the top of the hill they watched them go by.

"Damn buzzards!" Tobin apostrophized them. "Couldn't get enough Yaquis together, I reckon. . . ."

The Cananea district is too far north for genuine Yaqui raids. But most of the labor thereabouts is Indian labor,—a shifting, nomadic element. For any dirty work it was generally easy enough to collect some roving bunch. . . . In this instance the K. C. had given no warning and no time. . . .

It could not have been more than ten minutes later that rattling and clattering along the line amid a wild

burst of cheers from the boys, Wong and his kitchen-battery swung into place at the head of the outfit. They, too, had caught a glimpse of the bandits,—and were taking no chances. Wong "sabied" good and plenty the fate of a Chinaman caught napping in Mexico those days!

And now Charles had a happy thought. Wouldn't Lisa be better off with the chuckwagon? The big cook obligingly transferred himself to the top of a barrel. The cowboy teamster "reckoned that was the right dope. . . ."

For the rest of the drive, bowling along ahead of the dust and din of the cattle, Lisa found herself once more in Morella's scornful phrase "*la Reina*. . . ."

It was mid-afternoon before they baited. The herd was all in. . . . On the grassy banks of a stream, in the shade of some cottonwoods, Wong served dinner. And the way he handled that clamorous crew of famished cow-punchers was a miracle. There was hot biscuit and bacon and beans,—cooked the day before and brought along in a great boiler only needing to be heated. . . . Actually, there was pumpkin-pie! Flaky of crust, rich and savory of filling. . . . Such chaff,—such appetites! But nobody put anything over on Wong. Nobody hurried him. . . . Nobody cheated him. . . . Bland, smiling, imperturbable,—the man was a Celestial genius!

About sunset they were off again. A little after nine the moon rose. Lisa, who was beginning to grow sleepy, shook off her drowsiness to ask:—

"What is that shining white pillar set there for?"

"That pillar . . . ?"

A crackling fusillade from the cowboy driver's whip. A ringing cheer from the crew behind. They rattled past. . . .

"That pillar, ma'am? That means we're *Home* once more,—all hands *and* the cook,—in the good ol' U. S. A.!"

It was true. The international boundary had been passed. The K. C. cattle outfit,—lock stock, and barrel,—had cleared out of Mexico. . . .

As young Kelly had so succinctly stated the matter, it was an instance in which "the preliminaries" would be attended to afterwards.

## CHAPTER XVI

### HOW IT MAY PROVE CONVENIENT TO HAVE AN AUNT WHO COLLECTS TEAPOTS

CHARLES KELLY was an up-and-coming young business man. By no means did he consider himself, nor was he considered by others, to be an "easy mark."

He had not the slightest wish to be romantic. He liked a good horse and the free sweep of the open plains. He had been raised to the cattle business and it suited him.

But as to Romance. . . . Charles was distinctly practical. Romance didn't cut any ice with him. As a matter of fact, he didn't believe it existed; except in the imagination of a certain brand of people,—poets, musicians, actors,—his Aunt Rose and her friends. . . .

At school there had been football; at college more football;—with vacation came the range. . . . Of course, there had been girls, too. There was that time he had practically made up his mind to propose to Big Bill Tobin's prettier niece; and Bill had managed to postpone matters by sending him off to the Bonita after a bunch of horses. A month later when Charles got back with his mounts, the nieces were gone. Nobody's *amour propre* suffered; and Charles had come to feel distinctly grateful to Bill.

He was a very sensible young man, careful, too,—as his millions had taught him to be. The exotic, the unusual, had no appeal for him. Yet here he found himself in a situation that was practically a comic-opera situation. . . . And the only explanation he could find for it all,—was a pair of *gitana* eyes!

Charles, who wasn't much of a reader, remembered having once read somewhere that:—"Alphabetically speaking, it's the eyes of a woman that disturb the ease of a man. . . ."

The porter in his white jacket was progressing down the aisle, turning on the lights in the Pullman car.

They had just passed Pomona. It had been raining. The dusky sheen of orange groves through a mist of twilight landscape blurred against the splashed window-panes and receded as the train roared on. . . .

Half an hour more to Los Angeles. . . .

Charles looked across at his companion. God,—she was beautiful!

Even the shoddy little ready-to-wear blue serge suit, which was all they had been able to get in Naco to replace the tattered disreputability of her gypsy rags, could not disguise the grace, the inexpressibly sweet and lovely charm of her.

She had tact, too, and breeding; and, strangely enough, a serene, almost queenlike dignity.

She knew how to carry herself with servants,—the acid test. Her manner in the dining-car was perfect. Nothing fazed her. Indeed, throughout the three days' intimacy of their strange journey together, not once had she occasioned Charles a hint of public em-

barrassment. Probably because not once had she herself seemed to find anything embarrassing in their relations.

What he did for her she accepted quite simply,—appearing to take it almost as a matter of course. Yet it would have been impossible to believe she did not appreciate it. . . .

"You are good! Oh, *so good*. . ." she had told him that evening they had talked things over together in Naco. Since then, though no other word of acknowledgment had crossed her lips, again and again her eyes had spoken:—

"You are good," they said to him each morning over the breakfast table. "You are *so* good!" they reiterated every evening when he bade her good-night. . . .

She was almost confoundingly simple; yet without a hint of gaucherie.

"Early Christian. . . ." Curiously enough that seemed to be the only phrase Charles could hit on when he sought to define her:—

"An early Christian *gitana* dance-girl. . . . Good God!"

All the same, if she wasn't a gypsy, as she herself maintained (and whereas *gitana* dance-girls *always* told tarradiddles about themselves, it was hardly to be supposed an Early Christian would), then what in thunder was she? . . .

The evening at Naco they had had that nice little talk in the bare, railroad-hotel waiting-room she had explained,—just nothing at all! And Charles had found himself unequal to insisting on an explanation. He

understood well enough that by all the laws of "charity," since she looked to him for help, before committing himself to help her he should have assumed the prerogative of a census-taker:—screwed out of her some way, an admission of her age, the names of her parents (living or dead, American or Mexican), and where she had gone to school. . . . That she had gone to school was self-evident. A "good" school, too. It was the only allusion she seemed ever to permit herself;—yet even here there were no definite details. And definite details were what Charles knew he was entitled to.

Their talk had begun by Charles telling her he would be leaving the following day for Los Angeles. But as it would be impossible to ship the cattle immediately, Big Bill Tobin, who was to accompany the herd, would remain in the neighborhood till the promised cars arrived.

"Los Angeles!" she repeated, in her soft flowing voice with a little thrill of gratified surprise. . . . "Why,—that is where I want to go. You can take me with you. . . ."

"Have you any friends there?" he asked.

"I have no friends anywhere, señor;—but you. . . ."

"Well, have you any money, then?"

Her gesture dismissed the idea. "All I earned they took away from me. . . ."

Charles believed himself to have had experience with every known sort of grafter,—male or female. He was not an easy mark.

"What do you propose to do when you get to Los Angeles?"

"Señor, I wish to dance. They say it is easy to get started on the Pacific Coast. . . ."

Then with a look under which even a census-taker must have melted:—"There is so much sorrow in the world. . . . *Ah!*" The tragic pang brought both hands pressing to her heart. "I have been very unhappy. I do not believe there is anyone who has been more unhappy than I! That is why I want to dance . . . to make others forget their unhappiness. Besides," with one of her bewildering changes to the simply practical: —"I shall have to earn my living; and people make much money dancing. Do you think I am still pretty enough? The sunburn will wear off,—if you will buy me some cold cream. . . ."

"Of course I will," Charles found himself agreeing; and found in the same breath it would be as impossible for him to catechise her as to why she had been unhappy,—why she had no friends anywhere but himself, —as it would be to catechise any other gracious, beautiful woman, who had never been unhappy at all!

So what he said instead was:—"You'll need some things, to travel in, too, won't you? That rig isn't going to do. . . ."

It was then she told him how good he was. And the next morning they had gone shopping together. . . .

From that time on, she put herself implicitly in his hands. Not a question had she asked. Not a suggestion had she made to him. He was taking her to Los Angeles,—which was enough; though she had not seen the tickets he had bought, nor had she ever been over

the road before. Indeed, Charles had a shrewd suspicion this was actually her first railroad journey,—of any magnitude, at least. But if it were, she suppressed the fact under a quiet assumption of *bienséance* in which it would have been impossible to pick a flaw. . . .

He looked across at her now as she sat, her lovely head bent to a magazine he had bought for her.

Once he had been adopted by a homeless dog that showed very much the same sort of trust. And that dog had come to mean a lot to him. . . . "We get into Los Angeles in half an hour," was what he said.

She raised her eyes to smile. . . .

"I shan't be able to take you to my aunt's to-night. . . ."

"Your aunt, señor?" It was the first time there had been any mention of an aunt.

" Why, yes. . . . I'll have to arrange for you somewhere, you know. And my aunt—collects teapots. . . ."

"But. . . . I am not a teapot. . . ."

"Far from it, señorita. However, my aunt is a rather unusual woman,—interested in all sorts of. . . ."

"Curios?"

Charles shot a suspicious glance; but her smile was too charming for any sting.

"Well,—you know I didn't mean that. . . . Let me tell you. She's Rose Kelly,—the actress. . . ."

He thought he surprised a glimmer of startled recognition; but instantly the dark curtains of her lashes dropped. . . . She sat waiting without comment.

"So, if you do seriously want to take up dancing, there isn't anybody who could be more helpful getting you introductions and so on. . . . Provided. . . ."

"She likes me. . . ."

"That's the point exactly. And as a good deal generally depends on first impressions,—especially in the case of my aunt,—I've decided to put you up at some Y. W. C. A. boarding-place to-night. And in the morning we'll really go shopping and get you some decent things."

"Oh, you are good! I know I must look a fright. . . ."

"Well, hardly that. But we want to put our best foot forward. . . . My aunt's retired, now, you know; and she isn't very strong, and doesn't like to be bothered. . . ."

Lisa did not know. Her one impression of Rose Kelly remained a glittering, glamourful vision,—of lights, of music. . . . The vision of a fairy-path down which she herself,—given half a chance,—might have danced her way to the Land of Heart's Desire. . . .

Amid all the tragic débâcle of later developments, the vivid assurance of that evening in the theatre had never been erased. Through heartbreak, through humiliation of the flesh and of the spirit, had dawned the slow and self-accusing knowledge:—her feet had wandered into wrong ways because they had been afraid to climb! Philip could never have persuaded her to listen to him,—if it had not been for the traitor will within. . . .

That evening in Los Angeles the key to the Elysian Meadows had been hers! Raycroft would have helped

her. How could Philip have prevented that? Then when Michael and she had come to meet? . . . Oh, she mustn't let herself remember! She mustn't let herself think back. Hadn't she suffered enough? Hadn't she repented enough . . . to start with a clean slate?

Such at least was her present determination. So that the name of Rose Kelly seemed to her now to flash like a golden thread,—the clue that should lead her out from the tangled maze of circumstance where she had been wandering,—a hopeless prisoner so long. . . .

"I se-ee. . . ." The eyes lifted again to Charles were eyes that would have disturbed the ease of almost any man:—"You will take me to call on your aunt. . . . And I will dance for her. . . . And if she likes my dancing. . . ."

"That's the idea. . . ."

"Then what I ought to get is something that will look as if I were only intending to call;—and that at the same time will do to dance in. . . ." Her tone reflected the gravity the importance of the decision seemed to demand. "I *know!* A white Georgette crêpe with a Leghorn hat and a parasol. . . . People who are sunburned always look appropriate in white,—as if they were just up from the seaside. . . . White silk stockings,—I do love silk stockings! And—would two lace petticoats be too much?"

"I guess they wouldn't break us. . . ."

It was Charles who blushed. To Lisa the discussion seemed entirely natural. She had always been taken care of by some man;—first Philip, then Sylvestre.

Even Secundio, according to his lights, had done his duty by her. . . .

Rose Kelly was sixty-two. It was a leaky valve that had occasioned her retirement from the stage. To look at her one would have believed she was still on the sunny side of forty. To hear her laugh one would have imagined the thought of death as far from her as it was from the mockingbirds and orioles in her one-acre orange grove.

Yet it was always with a little sense of gratified surprise that Rose Kelly opened her eyes on a new day:—

"Same old scene," she'd remark sitting up in bed to ring for her maid. "Good enough for Rose. She's not asking another booking!"

The one-acre orange grove was situated between the sea and the mountains,—a lovely spot. It had not been the climate alone that had influenced Miss Kelly in her selection of southern California as an appropriate setting for her last days. She wanted to be near her brother and Charles.

The doctors weren't very encouraging. They may have considered it necessary to frighten her. Pushed to explicitness they had conceded a year, perhaps, if she remained on the stage; ten years, possibly, if she retired. The verdict, at the time, had seemed to her as final as an obituary. . . . Yet once settled in the sunny little orange grove with her cat, her maid and her teapots, Miss Kelly found the place suited her so exactly that she started in to plant a rose garden; and soon found she was planting at the same time the secret deter-

mination to hang on and fool 'em all,—till she was one hundred and four, anyway. . . .

It was because of this determination that she would *not* be bothered. Anything that bothered her was bad for the leaky valve. And memories of the stage certainly bothered. For if they had decided on cutting out her heart itself,—leaky valve and all,—she knew that it couldn't have hurt any more than cutting off her stage career had hurt. . . .

A glorious struggle from start to finish,—Rose Kelly's career! With no other backing than good looks, good health, good common sense,—an Irish immigrant girl,—she literally danced her way up.

Later she had learned to act, and act delightfully. That was a fifty-fifty proposition, half luck, half hard work;—as, with an unbiased recollection rather unusual among stage stars, people generally found her good-humoredly ready to admit. . . . The luck had consisted in her discovery by Anthony Dabney, who took her out of vaudeville and chucked her headfirst into romantic comedy parts. It was sink or swim then; and Rose swam. With Dabney directing her stroke, light comedy seemed what she had been cut out for. . . . Dabney had a flair for such discoveries.

She was ten years winning her place. For thirty years she held it. Then came the last lap of the race,—perhaps the most glorious part of the struggle,—when with broken health and failing powers, by sheer will force, she had played on to full houses. . . . Nobody but her grim-faced dragon of a maid and her own weary

old leaking valves would ever guess what those final triumphs had cost Rose Kelly. . . .

It was awful, of course, to have to give up. . . . Awful,—and yet a relief. If only she could forget to be *homesick!* The best way to forget is to refuse to remember. . . .

Charles, realizing his aunt's attitude toward her late profession, was even more difficult than Lisa herself in the selection of an appropriate panoply. At all hazards, the first impression must be an irresistible impression. . . . They took the whole morning to it; and at last found something that satisfied them both:—a clinging, seafoamish affair (Lisa explained it really was Georgette), embroidered about the square-cut neck and the hem of the skirt with narrow lines of iridescent beads. On the drooping brim of the Leghorn hat was one large, faintly flushing tea-rose. Nor did they forget the parasol, the lace petticoat, the silk stockings!

As she came to him from the little dressing-room between a double row of mirrors she seemed to float,—a lovely radiant vision of light, of fire. . . . Not too ethereal; for the glowing mellow bisque of her face and throat were warm, sunkissed, human. . . .

Charles found himself staring,—stupidly staring. . . . He was wondering if she actually had grown taller. But—no. . . . That was due to the straight lines of the skirt,—they were wearing them straight that season. . . . Lisa was really of medium stature; it was her delicate build, the perfect harmony and grace of her movements that made people think of her as "little. . . ."

"Will I do?" she asked, rather anxiously, troubled perhaps by his silence.

"You'll do," Charles answered a little huskily.

She was the most beautiful woman he had ever laid eyes on. Then why should there be that queer sinking twinge of something very like disappointment? Looking at her again, he knew. It was because there seemed so little of the gypsy dance-girl left. . . .

They found Miss Kelly among her roses, enveloped in a large gingham apron with a foamy bucket of whale-oil soapsuds.

"Charles!" At sight of her nephew she gathered the apron about her, sprang lightly over the bucket of suds, and came running up the driveway.

"Princess-Aunt! You know you mustn't run. . . ."

When Charles had been about seven years old he was taken to see his aunt on the stage. Charley Kelly senior (in this instance it was the father who carried the diminutive), wasn't a millionaire at that time. Cowboy, mining prospector, railroad man, he, like his sister, had fought his way up. . . . It was Rose Kelly's first Western tour under Dabney management. She was playing in one of those gorgeously costumed, romantically conceived rôles he had invented for her,—a Russian princess or something like that. Anyway, the curly head of the little Los Angeles boy was quite turned at the thought of actual relationship to so radiant a being. . . . Princess-Aunt was the name he invented for her; and through all the succeeding years Princess-Aunt had remained for Miss Kelly the very sweetest name in the

world. Charles, the rascal, may have suspected this. At least, it was a name he seemed to remember and bring out whenever there was anything especial for which he wanted to work his aunt. . . .

"Mustn't run? Who's been telling you, Charles? . . . *Rubbish!* A little healthful exercise. . . . Listen to me. All doctors are in league with the undertakers. The Countess of Desmond fell out of an appletree at one hundred and four and broke her leg. When *I* give my one hundred and fourth birthday party I'll invite every doctor who's ever consigned me to the tomb! But when did you get back? Anything happen down there?"

"Last night. Not a thing. I've brought Miss Elisa Reyes to see you." He turned to the girl seated beside him in the roadster. From the first Miss Kelly had been wondering as to the girl. "Miss Reyes has been dancing in Mexico. She is anxious to get an opening in Los Angeles. . . ."

"Good Lord, Charles! You know I'm not interested in the stage. It was to escape all that. . . ."

"We've been bold enough to hope Miss Reyes might revive your interest, ma'am. She is a *gitana*. . . ."

"No," corrected Lisa in her softest, most lingering voice. "I danced with the gypsies, señorita. But I myself am not a gypsy."

Miss Kelly shot a keen, appraising glance. If Charles did not care about Romance, his aunt adored it. Come right down to brass-tacks, it was Romance she was homesick for. She had worked all her life. . . . She often told herself she could be very happy off the stage, —if only there was a little more Romance! And a

*gitana* dance-girl with the air of a queen! . . . Of course the girl was a gypsy,—with those eyes. Unless they went round selling baskets and things they were bound to deny it. . . . However, as to dancing and stage introductions. . . . Charles ought to have remembered about her leaky valve:—

"Well, get down, both of you. I'm nothing but a retired old woman. Anybody who really *can* dance doesn't have to go begging for an opening these days. . . . It's easy to see you're Spanish, my dear. There's plenty of talent come out of Mexico."

Charles gave Lisa his hand. She sprang from the car:—

"O-h-h! How *beautiful* everything is! You live here, señorita,—with the roses and the cat?"

This second observation embraced two of Miss Kelly's pet hobbies. Really, with all the coaching in the world, —and Charles had not coached her,—Lisa couldn't have done better.

To add the last touch Sinbad, the pedigreed blue Persian, usually haughtily indifferent to strangers, had drifted over and was rubbing himself against the girl's silken knees.

Lisa stooped to stroke him. The two wandered away among the roses.

"Charles,—explain her. . . ."

"There doesn't seem to be any explanation. I've been hoping perhaps you would discover one, Aunt Rosebush. . . ." Another of his pet names. "I came on her first dancing (and dance she can!) in a *cantina*, —with as rascally a bunch. . . ."

They, too, wandered off to a hammock and some chairs grouped casually under a gigantic peppertree. In a circle of rocks were ferns and many colored begonias screened by a mist of waving green bamboo. A flash of oriole's wings,—a trickle of hidden water. . . . The perfumed breeze blowing in from the orange grove stirred the lacy fringes of the pepper-branches, gay with their drooping bunches of bright coral berries. The tree made a perfect canopy. Under it was Miss Kelly's al fresco reception room. No wonder she had determined to hang on and cheat the doctors. . . .

Charles, leaning earnestly toward her, related as briefly as possible the story of his discovery and rescue of Lisa. His very brevity made the most of the drama: —"And, Princess-Aunt, that's every earthly thing I can tell you about her! Of course, it's a mystery; of course, there's a tragedy back of it. . . . Mexico is full of tragedies these days. She probably has *gitana* blood;—but she never belonged with that bunch! She says she's gone to school. She bears the earmarks of it; and you can see for yourself she is . . . a lady."

"Charles . . . you're not in love with her!"

"My dear aunt! But what else was there I could do? . . . She hasn't a penny in the world; nor a friend according to her own account. I couldn't just drop her down in Los Angeles, could I? All I'm asking of you is that you will see her dance. . . ."

"If she hasn't any money,—where did she get those clothes?"

Charles had no time to answer. Lisa and Sinbad were coming back.

"Miss Reyes, I understand you want to dance for me. My nephew has explained to you, of course, that I have severed *all* connection with the stage. However, I used to dance. . . . One doesn't entirely forget. If you are ready we will go inside,—so you can change to your *gitana* things. . . ."

A stricken look between Lisa and Charles!

"Oh, señorita. . . . They were so old and—worn. . . . We . . . selected this dress this morning. Your nephew thought. . . ."

"Good Lord,—how like you, Charles!" Miss Kelly's disappointment was as vivid and unreasoning as a child's. Despite her show of reluctance, she was secretly *aching* to see the girl dance—had been, ever since Charles' clipt recital of the scene in the *cantina*,—the fight with the soldiers. . . . If that wasn't Romance for you! Her histrionic instinct, ears pricked, champed with impatience. . . . And here was Charles,—spoiling everything!

"Oh well,—of course. . . . It's out of the question she should do *gitana* dances in a dress like *that!* How could I possibly judge? And without music. . . . You'll be suggesting we turn on the phonograph, next! Really, Charles, I often wonder how you came to be my nephew. . . . If Michael Martyn were here,—with that Hungarian Rhapsody of his. . . . Not that he will ever play it again, poor boy. . . .

"*Miss Reyes!* Get some water, Charles! She's white as a sheet. . . ."

Lisa had sunk into one of the chairs. The dark lashes fluttered against her pale cheeks.

Miss Kelly, accustomed to exhibitions of the artistic temperament, put the collapse down to the girl's disappointment at not being allowed to dance. It rather flattered her; and at the same time her quick Irish sympathies were aroused:—

"There, there, child. I didn't say I wouldn't see you dance at all. . . . I said you couldn't dance this afternoon in that dress and with no music,—it wouldn't be a fair test. We'll get hold of a *gitana* costume somehow. We can't get Michael Martyn,—the young musician I was speaking of,—to play. He's in France,—such a waste!—fighting in the trenches. . . . This war is enough to break one's heart! . . . Is Charles supposed to be *digging a well?*"

She hurried into the house after her nephew:—"You've got it? I'll tell Susan to make some tea. . . . Really, Charles, I'm sorry to say so. . . . But you have acted like a *brute!* To drag that poor girl shopping all the morning,—then bring her over here, chuckfull of impossible expectations. . . ."

"My dear aunt,—what *was* I to do with her? I put her up at a Y. W. C. A. boarding-place last night. . . ."

A *gitana* dance-girl at a Y. W. C. A. boarding-place! Who but Charles would have thought of anything like that?

"Well, all I know is,—she couldn't dance this afternoon if I'd let her. So far as I can see,—she'll just have to stop here for a day or two till I can take hold of matters. What it will do to my leaky valves. . . ! But—she's a darling, Charles! And *beautiful.* . . . If she can dance as you *say* she can dance. . . ."

Suddenly Miss Kelly put both hands on her nephew's shoulders, reached up on tiptoes and kissed him,—with a great big smacking Irish kiss.

Doctors be hanged! As if it wasn't every bit as fatal to die of homesickness, inch by inch, as to let yourself be snuffed out by heart disease. . . .

## CHAPTER XVII

HOW MICHAEL WENT TO FRANCE FOR LOVE—AND LISA LEARNS HOW STRANGE A THING HAPPINESS CAN BE

MICHAEL in the trenches! Michael,—fighting in France!

The flutter of Lisa's lashes, the deep, broken, tremulous breaths she drew were the only outward signs of a mounting sea of emotion that choked her heart, that flooded her brain,—leaving her limp, helpless, bewildered. . . .

She pressed her hands against her eyelids, and the scorching tears trickled through her fingers. . . .

Oh,—she hadn't been expecting it! She hadn't been expecting it!

Always since their parting, her pictures of Michael had been happy pictures. It was to secure his happiness,—that she had gone away! With his youth, his gifts, his charm, surely the world must smile on Michael. . . . The way she saw him oftenest was the way she had seen him first that night of the concert,—slender, delicate, dominating,—a prince in his own realm,—swaying people's hearts, inspiring, uplifting their souls. That had come to be her Michael. The picture had comforted and sustained her through many a bitter ordeal. And now . . . now. . . .

It was all so confused . . . so incredible. . . . Lisa had hardly had time yet to recover from her bewilderment at her own re-emergence from the depth:—had not, as one might say, succeeded in orienting herself. In making up her mind to return to Los Angeles she had reasoned with that direct, almost childish simplicity of ratiocination that was an inherent part of her mental processes. . . . She had to earn her living. She believed she could earn it dancing. Mrs. O'Leary had once told her it was not hard to get started on the Pacific Coast.

The thought of Philip could not keep her away. She hoped she would not meet him. If she did meet him, she told herself she need no longer fear him. He would never have any power over her again. In her heart she believed she had come to forgive him; to realize that they had been betrayed, both of them, by their own weakness . . . that if Philip had done her harm, so, also, had she done harm to him.

As to Michael,—he in the East, she in the West,—Lisa had not given a thought to the chance of their ever meeting. People might speak of Michael, of course.

"Michael Martyn,—the young musician I was speaking about. . . ." It couldn't be anybody else!

Slowly Lisa sat up. She was alone under the peppertree. The sky that flickered through the green canopy of drooping fernlike foliage was sweet and tender and blue. Somewhere in the cool depths of the little orange grove a mockingbird was singing. . . . It was a beautiful world. It ought to have been a happy world! But

over there in France men were killing each other,—tearing each other to pieces like bloody rags. . . . And Michael was among them,—fighting, too.

"God! Oh, God!" the agony of her heart seemed to cry in her ears,—a passionate accusing voice:—"He wouldn't have gone,—if it hadn't been for me!"

She rose unsteadily to her feet,—and recalled how a moment before she had been standing out there among the roses in the sunshine, confidently waiting for the word that would give her leave to dance her way back to a new self-respect,—a new life. . . .

Was there to be no end to her punishment then? No end to her suffering? Wasn't anyone ever given a chance to wipe out the past and begin with a clean slate?

The glass-door in the side of the bungalow through which one stepped from "the teapot-room" out to the peppertree opened. Charles and Miss Kelly were coming out. They were both of them smiling, calling ahead to her:—She was all right again? In just a moment they would have a good cup of hot tea. . . .

Lisa, drilled to endurance, trained in an iron school of self-repression, smiled, too:—Yes, oh, yes. She was all right, now. And so very sorry to have made trouble.

Except for her pallor, except that her voice did not ring as their voices rang, no one would have suspected anything wrong.

Charles said:—"My aunt's been scolding me. She's as good as told me I'm a Merry Christmas frost as a theatrical agent. I hope you aren't going to agree

with her. It doesn't really agree with anybody, to be agreed with *too* often. . . ."

Miss Kelly laughed. And her laugh was one of the things that had made her:—"Good Lord, girl! You're not the first to imagine it's hop, skip, and jump,—over the footlights onto the stage. You think I didn't have to wait? You think I didn't have to work my head off? I'm not denying luck has something to do with it. Dabney was my luck. . . . But there's plenty besides the make-up the gallery never gets onto. . . . And if he wasn't a tyrant,—a slave-driver!"

"Señorita, I have danced with the gypsies. I know what dancing means."

Miss Kelly respected that answer. "So much the better, then." Her tone became businesslike:—"You'll not be expecting me to wave my wand and accomplish the impossible. Look here, Miss Reyes, you realize I can't commit myself to anything till I have seen you dance; and I realize it wouldn't be fair to let you dance this afternoon. . . . As that's the case, it seems to me the best arrangement will be for you to stop over here with me a couple of days. . . . Then we can take our time about things; and. . . ."

"Stop here with you . . . !"

Even to that dim torture chamber where Lisa's soul struggled, these words had power to penetrate:—"Oh, Miss Kelly! How *good* of you! I had . . . forgotten . . . such places could be!"

Charles got up, strolled across to the rustic table and put down his cup:—

"The best possible solution, Princess-Aunt. And I'm

sure that you and Miss Reyes are going to come to an understanding that will . . . that will . . . eventually. . . ."

"Charles,—you're staying for dinner?"

"Sorry, ma'am. But I can't. Promised to meet the Boss at six. . . ."

"He's back, then?"

"Gets in this afternoon."

"He's found a ranch?"

"Up near White River. Fine cow country, his letter said. Just as soon as we get a wire from Tobin, off I go. . . . Hope to get over before then. If I don't,—the dad will anyway. . . . Such a pleasure to be leaving Miss Reyes here. . . ."

But for all Charles's openly expressed gratification that Miss Reyes and his aunt should be "hitting things off so wonderfully," the chief feeling he was really conscious of was a queer little grumpy sense of something very like injury. . . . Just what one might expect,—with women. Yesterday, he remembered, it was he who was "so good. . . ."

At that moment Lisa looked up at him,—stretched out her hand. It was all Charles could do to stop himself in time. His aunt knew what an unromantic, matter-of-fact sort of fellow he was. What would she have thought then to see him bending to kiss the fingers of a *gitana* dance-girl?

"The teapot-room" was every bit as fascinating as the peppertree garden. . . . It occupied the front length of the bungalow, running from end to end of the

house. The ceiling, like many California bungalow ceilings, was low, and the walls were wainscoted to a height of nearly five feet. Both wainscoting and ceiling were of Oregon pine, stained in unvarnished green. The natural golden tints of the pine, its delicate graining, glimmered through the clear wash of stain as sunshine glimmers through a leafy canopy of treetops. . . . Rugs, furnishings, hangings, all graded to the same harmonious tones of green, of olive, of brown, with here and there a splash of gold,—a spangle of copper. Stepping through the quaintly fashioned doorway from the peppertree garden, it was almost as if one had stepped inside the trunk of the tree itself.

There were perhaps a hundred teapots in the room, and they were most of them little teapots,—odd, amusing, suggestive. Lisa followed them round the narrow rail that topped the wainscot, very much as a child would follow a fairy story. . . . You began with a little brown pot-bellied clay teapot from Japan, the only ornamentation of which were the thumb-marks of the potter till you came to the lid,—a grotesquely coiled dragon. A little further along were the Seven Gods of Happiness from China. . . . There was a Willowware teapot, of course; and a gorgeous "Indian-tree" teapot. There was a delicious green Wedgwood teapot with Flaxman decorations, delicate as splashed seafoam. There was a miniature jewel of a *cloisonné* teapot, gay in butterfly wings. There were flower-wreathed teapots from Limoges, from Dresden. . . . The only rule seemed to be nothing must be more than four inches tall. It was a regular hop-o-my-thumb collection.

Miss Kelly liked the way Lisa followed round the rail, —without question and without exclamation. The girl was proving herself decidedly a restful person and very —appealing. She still seemed tired, almost a little dazed. She had hardly touched her dinner. Yet no one could question her appreciation; and she was, as Charles had stated, indubitably a lady. . . .

Who knew what she'd been through, poor child! Just as Charles said, anything might happen in Mexico these days. . . . Miss Kelly kept thinking of the time she and her brother Charley had landed in New York,— with only one little horsehair trunk and a bundle between them. This girl hadn't even a bundle; hadn't anything, apparently, but the clothes Charles had bought for her.

What was she looking at now,—standing so quietly there with her clasped hands? Oh, that photograph of Michael Martyn. . . .

Michael was a prime favorite with Miss Kelly. She was always ready to talk about him. She had met him several years ago in New York when he first came back from Germany. But his father and she were old friends. . . . One might even have inferred certain sentimental associations connected with Robert Martyn in Miss Kelly's past. The fact that there had been ten years difference in their ages would be no detriment. Indeed, had the promising young artist that Robert Martyn was in those days followed the law of averages established by his sort, it was a safe bet he had thought himself in love with the brilliant and successful actress who

was always so kind to him. That, of course, was before Judith's day. . . . The supposition would at least account for the half tender, half whimsical air of affectionate proprietorship adopted by Miss Kelly toward the son. . . .

"That's Michael Martyn,—the young musician I was speaking of this afternoon." It was inevitable she should begin now.

"A beautiful face,—don't you think, Miss Reyes?"

And because these were the very words Lisa had been waiting for, she did not turn. She could not have spoken of the photograph,—she could not have spoken at all. But she had felt quite sure that if she stood there long enough, Miss Kelly would speak. . . .

"One of the sweetest fellows I have ever known. Oh, my dear,—such a sacrifice! It's all very well to say that his musical future was ruined. . . . I never did believe that with patience the lost flexibility couldn't have been restored. But Michael was always like that, —oversensitive, quixotic. . . ."

Lisa crossed the bright room with its cheerful fire. She threw herself down on a couch, a little withdrawn in the shadows, and lay there quite flat,—as if she was very tired. Presently came Sinbad, the cat, stretching and purring. Sinbad, who never made up to strangers, was making an exception of the beautiful *gitana* girl. . . .

"What do you mean by the lost flexibility?"

Miss Kelly noticed the tragic quality of the voice. The girl, caught young enough, might have made an

actress. . . . Dancing was the next thing to acting, these days. They would see. . . .

She explained that Michael Martyn had received an injury in a hotel fire. Right out here on the Coast,—the Buena Vista, at Corona. It was to have been the occasion of his Western début. . . . No one believed the burns serious, at first; but some later exposure or neglect had resulted in a stiffening of the muscles. What to the average man would have been a matter of little importance, to the young violinist had seemed the wreck of every hope. . . .

"And there were other complications. An affair with a model. . . ." Miss Kelly was vague as to details. It had all happened before she came West. Obviously, the girl couldn't have been much good. Her relations with Philip Cortwright would prove that. "Michael was always such a dear . . . so chivalrous and innocent! More like a girl himself, when I knew him. Well,—she disappeared. People said she drowned herself. Probably had her reasons. . . . And what should Michael do but start off to Canada,—to enlist. He was keen about the war from the first,—long before the rest of us realized. Oh, it was inevitable, I suppose. . . ."

That was over a year ago. He had written once after his arrival in France. Then had come a break. She had heard nothing since August. . . . That dreadful Somme offensive. . . .

"What a sigh, Miss Reyes! I feel the same myself. The flower of our age,—all those young and promising lives mowed down in blood. . . . America will be involved next,—you'll see. . . ."

"Philip Cortwright,—what did he do after he lost his model?" Miss Kelly, who always enjoyed her own stories, found the particularity of Lisa's interest nothing but flattering:—

"Married,—in six months! John Madison's niece." Even in Mexico people must have heard of John Madison. "The girl by all accounts was something of a pill, —but thoroughly gilded. He's never done anything much since. Given up the San Miguel studio. Has a place on Long Island,—a yacht and all the fixings. The finish of almost any artist,—a rich marriage. . . ."

Lisa, sinking to sleep that night, seemed to herself to be sinking down, down, down into a sombrous pit of hopeless desolate despair.

She had gone away—that Michael might be happy!

Engendered in misery, watered by penitent tears, her sacrifice had come to bloom in her heart, a flower of serene, unreasoned, radiant assurance:—a flower now broken, trampled, blood-smeared. Michael was in the trenches!

If he had not loved her, he would never have gone.

Love? What had their love been? Something to be wasted, played with, thrown away. . . .

God. There was no God.

She fell asleep as she had used to fall asleep after one of Secundio's beatings; and in her sleep she sobbed and caught her breath. . . .

About the middle of the night she wakened. . . .

Why had Michael gone to France?

In the darkness and the stillness it seemed almost as if a voice had roused her with the question. . . .

"It's not because I was unhappy in Germany. It's because I can't bear what they are doing."

Words she had long forgotten came back to her. . . .

Up to that afternoon under the peppertree it might be said the war had never "registered" with Lisa. In the old days at San Miguel it was natural her attitude should reflect Philip's. In Mexico and on the Island with the gypsies the most one heard was an occasional careless allusion. Once in Naco, again on the train, Lisa had started to read some of the papers Charles had bought; but the confused headlines, the terrible accounts of bloodshed, of wholesale slaughter, had repelled her and she had turned again to her magazines. . . .

Now, sitting up in the darkness, shivering, huddling her knees in her clasped hands, for the first time some personal responsive comprehension of what the war really meant struck home to Lisa. . . .

Germany was like Secundio with his savage stick. Michael had gone to France because he could not stay away. . . . Because there were people crying out in agony,—as she had used to cry when Secundio fell on her,—women and little children. . . .

She had wanted a new life. She had wanted to begin with a clean slate. Did that mean she wanted to wipe out her memories of Michael?

Lisa pressed her hands against her breast and trembled. There was a pain there like a sword. It was not only for Michael,—it was for all those others who suffered. . . .

Michael had gone to France for love. . . . It was God.

There was to be no theatrical wand-waving for Lisa.

Miss Kelly having seen her dance was enthusiastic; but she restrained her enthusiasm. What is more, she insisted that Charles restrain his:—

"She'll do," she told him. "But for her own sake all we can give her is the chance to prove she will do. There could be nothing more fatal than a false start now at a pace she isn't prepared for. If people realize we're back of her,—that's enough. I know what I'm talking about. Leave it to me. . . ."

Charles respected his aunt's opinion too much to raise any objections; though the delay irked him. From the first his own belief in Lisa's possibilities had been boundless.

It was arranged then that Miss Reyes should be given a month's trial in regulation chorus ballet work at the Punch and Judy,—to show what was in her. . . .

At the end of the first rehearsal, with characteristic simplicity, she sought the manager's office:—

"There is no use my trying to dance like that," she said. "It is stiff and very stupid. What I know is something altogether different and much more beautiful. *Gitanas* are not shod like horses;—they have wings to their heels. I must dance by myself, or I cannot dance at all. . . ."

The manager of the Punch and Judy happened to be a young man who had come West because he had

broken down in the East under the physical and financial strain of trying to start something "new" at Coney Island.

The sublime audacity of the girl struck a congenial chord.

"Say,—I wouldn't wonder if there was something in that. . . . I'll give you a turn at the children's matinée next Saturday. If you don't make a go of it, there's no special damage done; and if you do. . . ." Decidedly, a genuine *gitana* dance-girl was a novelty.

"The children's matinée? I'll make a go of it."

And Lisa kept her word. After Saturday afternoon's performance there was no further talk of pony-ballet drill for Miss Reyes.

Western managers are not glutted with material as are those in the East. And Lisa possessed the three prime personal requisites:—beauty, talent, temperament. These being sponsored for by the Kelly millions, the Kelly professional prestige, her success was a foregone conclusion.

That first season she danced for children,—two matinées a week. Her work consisted chiefly of *gitana* features with some fascinatingly delicate and original nature interpretations. In her specialty she had had a unique training. Secundio, for all the brutal savagery of his nature, was in his art the embodiment of a wild and untaught genius. And back of his influence were the long years of studio posing for Philip Cortwright. There is nothing more plastic, more retentive, than the imagination of a child. In Lisa's dancing now,—in what even she herself considered her most spontaneous

improvisations,—the spirit of those early artistic impressions, the "Butterfly," the "Dewdrop," the "Wildflower," bloomed again.

By February people had begun to talk of the beautiful *gitana* dance-girl at the "P. and J." In a modest, local sort of way, Lisa's vogue was becoming established. Her salary, as is generally the case with salaries, was even more modest, more "local." She had signed up for the season. There could be no talk of a raise till spring; but Lisa, who had always been extravagant, developed a wonderful new pride in "managing. . . ."

Without asking anybody's advice she found for herself a cheap little furnished apartment,—kitchenette, living-room, and bath,—on the top floor of a somewhat shabby "family hotel." It was in the downtown section, convenient to her work, which would save carfare; convenient to the cafeterias where she could get her dinners. The street was a narrow street of bare and glaring asphalt, lined on either side by equally bare and glaring brick and mortar apartment-houses. But it ran uphill. "The family hotel" was a story higher than any of the surrounding buildings; and from Lisa's living-room window on cloudless days could be glimpsed a far line of shimmering blue. This blue line, the agent who showed her the apartment explained, was really a "view of the ocean." And it was for this "ocean view" Lisa took the apartment.

Charles coming to call on her for the first time in her new domicile was anything but satisfied:—

"Look here, Miss Reyes, this isn't going to do. . . . This isn't the sort of place for you at all. . . ." And

then, rather awkwardly, he made the proposal that she let him be her banker that first winter. The salary at the "P. and J." wasn't a living salary. . . . It would be an arrangement known to no one but themselves. She could pay him back, if she wanted to,—later on when *all* the managers were clamoring for contracts. . . .

"No. . . . Oh, *no!*" The look lifted to his was not in the least offended. It was rather the frightened look of a child who thinks somebody is going to take something away. . . .

So after that Charles satisfied himself by bringing her candy (Lisa did love candy) and flowers which she always set in the open window "where they could breathe. . . ." And once a week anyway he would stop for her in his car and take her out to his aunt's.

From the first, Miss Kelly had felt Lisa's charm. Now the girl's grave absorption in her work, her dignity, her reserve (if there are things you don't want to talk about, why talk about them?), compelled respect as well as liking. Rose Kelly, who knew what it meant to maintain an economic equilibrium while dancing one's way up was giving to Lisa the best and most helpful thing she had to give;—a readiness to accept the young dancer on a footing of professional rapprochement and fraternity. . . .

Success does not "happen" on the stage. To work, to work, to study, to sacrifice and to rise! Lisa, who all her life had longed for happiness;—was beginning to learn how strange a thing happiness can be! She was happy in her shabby little room with its far glimmer

of "ocean view;" she was happy in her independence; she was happy in her little audiences at the Punch and Judy. . . . They threw her flowers, sometimes, they clapped their hands and laughed.

It was February that she gave her Valentine party for "all the orphans. . . ."

Without the Kelly backing, it is hardly to be supposed that anything like *that* could have happened so soon; though something in the phrase itself as proposed by Miss Reyes would appear to have struck home to the advertising sense of the "P. and J." young manager:—

"*All* the orphans? Say,—that sounds sort of appealing. . . ." He did not add, though he might have, that just recently he had begun to think the *gitana* dances would pay for a little special featuring. . . .

The evening of the fourteenth the house was packed. Rows on rows of little set faces. The theatre was, perhaps, too rare a treat. In their stiff, ugly, charitable garb, the children did not thaw at first. They were used to being suppressed, poor mites.

Lisa went after them, hammer and tongs. Gay, tender, bubbling over with spontaneity and make-believe, she gave them what unknowingly their starved little hearts hungered for. It was that night she brought out her "Lucky Devil Dance. . . ." After the first crow of startled delight, the performance went with a bang!

At the very end the *gitana* dance-girl came running to the edge of the stage,—and hung there for a moment with extended arms. . . .

"Why," remarked one of the directresses to the Sister beside her, "she's crying. . . ."

"Crying? Impossible. . . ."

"Impossible or not,—there are tears on her cheeks."

## CHAPTER XVIII

HOW LISA TOLD CHARLES' FORTUNE—"LA VIDA ES SUEÑO"

NO man with a spark of romance in him would think of proposing at a kitchen sink! Perhaps that was the reason Charles Kelly found himself thinking about it on a lovely Sunday afternoon in April,—two hours after he had enlisted in the U. S. Marines.

He was back unexpectedly from a month's stay at the ranch. As he hadn't found Lisa at home at her "family hotel," he was pretty sure he would find her at home under his aunt's peppertree.

Sunday tea was really Sunday supper with Miss Kelly; because Susan (her grim-faced maid of long years' service and despotic temperament), took Sunday afternoons to visit a niece. The niece had married a retired railway conductor. When Susan followed Miss Kelly's "hazard of new fortunes" to California, they had followed Susan. They had bought a little ranch and settled down to raise white leghorns. Once a week Susan had to go out and superintend the incubators. There were various indications the retired railway conductor looked forward to these visits with mixed emotions. But Susan had money put by; and relations-in-law with money generally find themselves tolerated.

Anyway, the Kellys got a lot of fun out of Sunday

afternoons. It was quite the established custom that Charles and his father (when in town), should come over for tea under the peppertree. Gradually Lisa found herself included in these parties. They were always "parties." Even if Charles was away, she knew the others expected her. . . .

This special Sunday they had none of them been expecting Charles. And when they found out what he was down for they all made such a fuss over him. (It was the first Sunday after the signing of America's declaration of belligerency,—and, as you may remember, in those days, we did make a fuss over them when they enlisted), that the poor fellow actually couldn't find time to think of beginning to propose till after supper when he and Lisa were clearing away the tea things and piling them up at the kitchen sink,—to be neatly ready for Susan in the morning. . . .

It goes without saying that had Miss Kelly wanted a second maid she might have had six! But to every suggestion of her brother's that her household staff be enlarged, she returned the same answer:—

"My dear Charley! You *know* Susan."

"Susan be hanged!"

"That's all very well. It isn't you she'd look at as if you had stuck a hatpin into her sawdust and ask:—'Is it that you feel, ma'am, you'd be better suited with a *younger* somebody,—after thirty years?' . . . Anyway, I came to California to retire. One maid, one cat, one orange grove, and one hundred teapots are enough!"

Fortunately Susan had taken to Miss Reyes. "She *adds* to the home," was her form of approval. . . .

It may have been Charles himself was thinking something like that as he watched Lisa standing by the sink, scalding out the little copper kettle and setting it in the open window to air. She was wearing forget-me-not blue that afternoon,—with a frilly white apron. In his heart of hearts Charles knelt to that apron:—

"Miss Reyes. . . ." He cleared his throat.

She looked up then. What she saw in his eyes would have warned any woman. And it mustn't happen! Oh! it mustn't. . . . He had always been *so* good to her! He was her friend. . . .

"Señor," Lisa, who had practically dropped her Spanish, preserved this appellation for him alone. It was accepted between them as a little term of affectionate recollection and regard:—"you remember another evening when you were going on a journey, and the young gypsy woman who sat in the door of the *cantina* wanted to tell your fortune. Señor, I also tell *la buenaventura*. . . . Give me your hand. . . ."

With the best will in the world, he gave it. . . .

"*La Santita Gitana*. . . ." It was old Paula, the Mexican scrub-woman at the "P. and J." who had first called Lisa that. Others took up the name;—for her heart was as sweet as her face, they said. There was always some story of her goodness; of this one or that she had helped. . . .

Charles found himself wondering if his aunt had violets blooming in her garden. . . . But no. . . . It was from the little dark head bent so gravely to his open palm the breath of perfume came. . . .

He smiled. This evening was not the first time he

had found it hard to realize that this serene and beautiful young woman (admired of all, envied by many), was one and the same as the desperate little Mexican gypsy who had clung terror-wild about his neck as they raced together amid scattering bullets. . . .

"Señor, you have a happy hand. . . ."

She was looking up at him again, and her eyes were soft with love and solicitude,—with an almost humble appeal for understanding. . . . But above all they were eloquent of womanly composure and command:—

"I see no lines here but happy lines. There must be nothing else. . . . I see you are going into danger. You go only because you are good. You will come back again in safety and in honor,—to find such contentment as a man's heart most craves. . . ."

Breaking her tone to a confidential aside:—"You prefer blondes?—brunettes?"

"Brunettes," answered Charles succinctly.

"You think so now. But that will change. . . . Señor, here there is a little wound." She indicated with a rosy finger-nail a crossed line on the map of his palm:—"Forget it! For it will not even leave a scar; and from it shall grow the greatest good of all. . . . You will love and you will marry;—and she shall have blue eyes! Happy eyes that have never had to learn to keep a secret. All her heart and all her life shall be to you as an open book. . . ."

Before Charles knew what she was about, he felt her lips on her hand. . . . And when he looked down at the little warm place they had left he saw it was a tear.

Next day he was off with a batch of recruits traveling

East;—and nobody, not even his aunt, ever heard how he had his fortune told him at the kitchen sink. . . .

It was during the War "*la Santita Gitana*" danced her way to fortune and to fame. There was so much sorrow in the world,—she wanted to help people forget!

Night after night she spent herself for the pleasure of her audiences. Night after night she danced for them,—as beauty dances in the rainbow. People wondered at her freshness, her spontaneity. There was nothing mechanical. . . . No flash of ragtime,—no blare of jazz. . . . She was gay, and she was tender. She was as full of frolic mischief as a woodland squirrel. Yet half the time when they applauded they had tears in their eyes. That was because she gave back to them something that they thought they had lost. . . .

Everybody who came to Los Angeles must see *la Santita Gitana.* She was the city's darling. Of course, when Miklovitch, the great Russian came, he must see her, too. But even before Miklovitch "discovered" her, locally she was known as a star.

She was one of those stage favorites popular almost as much for her personality as for her art. Society would have welcomed her; but she cared nothing for society. Beautiful as she was, she had no lovers. . . . Though her heart "was as tender as an angel's" old Paula, the Mexican scrub-woman, would tell you "it was not for men. . . ."

The truth of the matter was, Lisa had come to believe that Michael was dead. There had been no news of him for over two years, now. . . . In those last days

of agonizing struggle many must have fallen unrecorded. . . . She could wear no outward badge of mourning; but the secret bleeding of her heart blossomed into lovely deeds. She wanted to be good enough to go on loving Michael,—even if he was in Heaven! That was the reason she lived like a saint, and danced like a gypsy, and gave away more than half the money that she made. . . .

Perhaps it was because she wanted money to give away that she still continued to occupy her little two-room apartment on the top floor of the shabby "family hotel." It was clean and it was high, she said. And where else could she have found a window with "an ocean view?"

Another reason she did not want to move (but of which she said nothing) may have been that there were people there who would have missed her if she had gone. . . . It really was a *decidedly* shabby family hotel, in a *decidedly* shabby part of the city. Decidedly shabby people have a way of drifting to such places. People who are ashamed, perhaps, to ask for help; but who may need it most of all.

It was among these people she had her friends.

For instance, there was the young artist who reminded her of Owen Griffeth. He had a baby and a wife who took in sewing. And often when the windows were open Lisa could hear him coughing all through the summer nights. . . . He lived in the apartment directly below hers. Like Owen he *would* go on working! But the worst of it was, he could not find any market for his work. His wife practically supported the family with

her needle. . . . And she was always worrying about the "goat-milk bill." The doctor said her husband must have goat-milk. . . . But it was nearly thirty cents a quart!

Lisa took it on herself to manage that that bill should be paid. The way she did it was by declaring that she was *sure* people would appreciate Mr. Shepherd's pictures,—if only they could be brought into notice. Then she went to an art-dealer and induced him to display some of them in his window. Of course, no one did buy anything;—till just about the time the goat-milk bill was coming due. . . . Then Lisa would herself slip in and surreptitiously purchase a sketch, with strict injunctions the name of the buyer remain unknown. . . . When she got home, she hid it in her closet! and presented the purchase price with an air of surprise and triumph to her delighted friends. That way the goat milk *did* do the poor struggling young artist (who was not entirely without ability, but had neither backing nor health) all the good in the world.

People were always coming and going at the family hotel. Many of them, of course, Lisa did not know at all. . . .

It was one sultry evening in September, the last year of the war, that an old gentleman who had rented the apartment opposite *la Santita Gitana* fell down stairs and broke his thigh-bone. Somehow, old people have a way of falling. And bones are brittle at eighty-odd. . . .

Lisa, alone in her rooms, heard the racket and ran out.

It happened she was wearing gypsy dress. The heart

of the gypsy is closest of all to the heart of Nature. . . . Things "came" to Lisa when she dressed like that. . . . So she kept one of her old stage costumes in the closet with the pictures that she hid, to wear about at home when she wanted to work up a new dance. . . .

The poor old man lay in a huddled heap on the landing. Up the stairs and down the stairs people came running. But Lisa, who was nearest, was the first to reach him.

The light on the landing was dim. . . . He had white hair and it was bloody; for he had struck his head against the newel-post as he fell. . . .

Lisa tried to keep the blood from running into his eyes. . . .

He opened them . . . and the shabby staircase vanished. In its place there shimmered an arc of glittering beach. . . . Gray headlands where the sun shone bright and blinding. . . .

"*La vida es sueño!* (Life is a dream)" he whispered.

And then, strangely, in the Romano tongue:—"Out of what sky did you fly, little sister? Many times have I danced with the *gitanos*. . . ."

It was the old Señor de la Rosa,—someone was saying,—who had, only the day before, rented a room on the top floor of the hotel.

To Lisa, of course, the name meant nothing. . . . But the old man had spoken to her in the "secret language. . . ." He lay there, his bleeding head pillowed in her lap. They must call a doctor! They must get him to bed. . . .

Every day after that *la Santita Gitana* would go in

and sit with her *caballero*. How he suffered! The doctor said he would never get out of his bed again.

But for Lisa he always had a smile. Had he not also danced with the gypsies? Girls who glowed and sparkled in the dusk. Girls with wings to their heels. . . . One girl like the flame of a candle. . . . Now he was old and alone. . . . His great fear was he would spend all his money before he could be properly dead. . . . In Mexico everybody knew the de la Rosas. . . . They knew there was property,—much property,—that should some day be restored. . . . But in Los Angeles nobody cared about anything they could not see or touch. He was sure the janitor, who waited on him, cheated him. . . . What would happen when all his money was gone?

Lisa finally persuaded the old gentleman to let her take charge of his purse. She knew places where you could buy things! . . . And after that the money did go just twice as far! The janitor hated her for it; but she and Señor de la Rosa became the most devoted of friends.

He liked to talk to her of his four sons,—who were all of them dead. One had been a Governor, and two had been generals; but his favorite was a singer,—and he was drowned. . . .

"My mother was drowned," Lisa answered unexpectedly; and on an impulse that surprised herself she went to her room and got the watch Mamá Soledad had given her on the Island and brought it to the old man as he lay propped up in bed. . . .

It must be remembered that this was the first time

that Lisa had spoken of her mother to anybody since that golden morning in May (so many years ago!) when she and Snapdragon talked together about fairies,—and a few other things. . . .

Señor de la Rosa took the watch in his hand. . . . And his hand began to tremble. . . . He stared strangely at the heavy, old-fashioned, ornamental case . . . at the obscure monogram:—

"Where did you get this?" he asked. His voice was stern.

"Tell me,—tell me everything you know. . . ."

The questioning of a vague and reluctant child is a very different matter from the questioning of an intelligent young woman, who is sure of her facts;—who has remembered them and rehearsed them so often in her own mind that they can no longer be called vague. . . . Of course, the psychology of the thing resolved itself into this:— That for the only time in her life Lisa had an impulse to trust someone with her story.

All she could remember about the shipwreck and her childhood on the Island with the gypsies, she told. She told of how she had been sold "to a rich gentleman" for twenty dollars. . . . And he had been good to her and sent her to school. . . . till one day she had to leave him and go back to the Island. . . . It was then Mamá Soledad had given her the watch. . . .

"Did she tell you how *she* came by it?" He was watching her sharply.

"No, Mamá Soledad had never told that. . . ."

There's always somebody ready to blame the *gitanos.*

. . . Perhaps Señor de la Rosa did not feel he had the right to blame. . . .

Anyway, what he did was to take Lisa's hand in his and draw her gently down till she knelt there close beside him on the floor:—

"Poor little flower,—cast on a stormy sea! The young man has no thought of the future. To him beauty is beauty the wide world over,—nothing too high for him, nothing too low. . . . Listen, my dear. . . ."

And so it happened at last that Lisa came to know who was her father, and who her mother. . . . And how she had been cast up on the Island; and why, though you couldn't call her quite a gypsy (since the de la Rosas were of the proudest blood in Mexico), she should have such gypsy-looking eyes!

I do not know whether in telling her story to her grandfather Lisa told how as a little girl her mother had always lived for her "with God among the stars. . . ." But I do know that in what he told her about her mother there was no reason she should not go on living there! The story was twenty years old; and time is a great softener. . . .

"*La Vida es sueño.* No one can bring back the past." He finished and sighed.

But I think it would have been truer had he said, life is a shadow,—a shadow of the things that have gone before. For if no one can bring back the past, can anyone escape it? The misfortunes, the hardships we find heaviest to bear, are they not shadows,—shadows all . . . of some wrong deed sown long ago, perhaps, in carelessness . . . in mirth. . . .

It is a great thing to find a grandfather,—if only to lose him again. . . . The newspapers told of the "vast Mexican estates" Señor de la Rosa had left to his granddaughter, Miss Elisa de la Rosa,—whose stage name was Lisa Reyes. They told of the romantic reunion of the two in the cheap apartment-hotel where Miss Reyes had been living during the war because of her "charitable activities." Both were refugees out of Mexico. . . .

It was probably Miss Kelly who manipulated these notices. By this time she was *very* fond of Lisa. And it seemed to her the most satisfactory thing in the world "that all that Mexican mystery" should be cleared up. . . . Then in the flashing of the Armistice news,—the rejoicings and celebrations of victory,—the matter was side-tracked.

As to the Mexican millions,—there was enough money left to bury the poor old man. And *la Santita Gitana* did not need to think about inherited fortunes;—since it was that same autumn Miklovitch saw her dance!

## CHAPTER XIX

### FLOWER OF THE WORLD

MIKLOVITCH called Lisa his "little miracle. . . ." For in her dancing even he, the greatest of all the Russians, could find nothing to be added,—nothing to be taken away. And that in America, the traditional home of the "clog-dance" and the "buck-and-wing. . . ."

"It could never have happened if she had not come out of Mexico," he said. And added: "But you are tired. . . ."

"Oh, no," Lisa protested; to learn one did not protest when Miklovitch spoke:—

"*You are tired.* And you cannot dance for me till you are fresh again as a spring morning!"

Besides, he assured her, there was any amount of work to be done on his new ballet before she would be needed. Rehearsals were not to begin till some time in January. Lisa was to come on to New York the first of the year; and in the meantime there was to be an interval of beautiful rest under Miss Kelly's peppertree:—

"I do think, Lisa, the least you can do is to spare me a visit,—before you go away and forget. . . ."

"Oh,—Miss Kelly!"

"There. . . . I'm a selfish old woman,—if you like. Too old to apologize, anyway. . . . I suppose the time comes to all of us when we realize there is no holding back the tide. . . ."

The war had been very hard on Miss Kelly's leaky valves. Without Lisa she did not believe she ever *would* have gotten through that terrible nerve-racking stretch when there had been no letters from Charles at all; and they knew he was fighting in the Argonne; and every morning with sick hearts they turned first to the casualty lists. . . .

When at last his letters did begin to arrive from the hospital in Brest, the two women shared them, thrill for thrill. To both they seemed the most wonderful letters in the world. . . . They were rather wonderful, those war-letters, with their casual allusions to things of horror, to things heroic. To turn back and read them is perhaps the best possible antidote to the moral befogments, the political disillusion of our own day. . . .

Charles' letters rarely ran to more than a page. And the rest of the morning could be spent delightfully,—guessing!

"No," declared Lisa, positively. "You can see for yourself—they haven't had to amputate. Look where he says:—

"*The poor fellow next me is making out amazingly with his hook-hand. But I can tell,—it's some stunt. I'm glad I shan't have to learn. . . .*"

"H'm," commented Miss Kelly:—"This nurse he speaks of so often must be a Scotch girl. . . . Miss Mary McDonald. . . . you don't know Charles as I do,—the most susceptible fellow in the world. . . ."

But it would almost seem as if Lisa thought she did know Charles, quite as well as his aunt, the way she looked up from *her* letter with a little smile:—

"Oh, I'm so glad! I'm *so glad!* And I'm sure she has blue eyes. . . . Almost all Scotch girls do have. . . ."

"Blue eyes? Where does he say anything about her eyes?"

"He doesn't, dear. I was just thinking. . . . But isn't this a lovely way for him to feel:—

"*Well, it's over. And I can tell you, now it is over, I wouldn't have missed any of it. Even the things it would be impossible to write about; the things one must do one's best to forget. I think that's the way most of the fellows size it all up. . . . Take the way we have come to feel about women. I tell you, these war-nurses over here seem just a little bit of Heaven-Come-True. . . . I think I have spoken of a Miss Mary McDonald. . . .*"

"Spoken of her? My hat,—not at all! But I don't see how you make out from that her eyes are blue . . .?"

"Perhaps it's the gypsy in me! Most Scotch girls do have blue eyes. . . . Wait and see. . . ."

Still smiling to herself Lisa pulled on her gloves, took up her little basket and scissors and passed out of the peppertree door to the rose garden. After the mail, the next thing was fresh flowers for all the vases. Susan had come to depend on Lisa for that. . . .

There was still one letter left on Miss Kelly's tray. Because the address was in an unfamiliar hand she had left it till the last. The New York postmark gave no warning. Naturally, much of her correspondence, as well as much of Lisa's these days, came from New York. . . .

In spite of the stationery when Miss Kelly opened the letter, she thought at first it must be some begging scrawl. For it was written in pencil, and the initial impression was one of awkward illiteracy. . . . It was not till she had read it through to the signature (and read it again), that she could believe!

It was very short. And it was from Michael Martyn. He was home again! He was writing to ask her if she would be able to put him up for a day or two? . . . The doctors had recommended California. . . . And he must tell her,—he wasn't in very good shape. He had been "gassed"; and then he had been taken prisoner. . . . That was nearly three years ago. It was possible with proper treatment at first, his eyes might have been saved. . . . The scrawl ran off the page here. . . . But he was learning to readjust himself; and would try not to be a nuisance,—if Miss Kelly "could put him up for a day or two,—just till he had time to look round. . . ."

Lisa returning with her basket of brimming flowers stopped for a moment perplexed in the peppertree door. . . . There was a sound she did not understand.

Then she saw it was Miss Kelly,—sobbing, sobbing, rocking back and forth,—the tears trickling through her fingers that were pressed against her face:—

"Wicked . . . oh, wicked! With his gifts,—his youth! Who *lets* such things happen? Better, better for him,—poor boy,—if he had never come home at all!"

Though the peppertree bungalow was, in itself, just about big enough for Miss Kelly and Susan and some

one like Lisa (who, Susan still declared, "*added* to the home"), they were fortunate in having an annex, or detached guest-room. . . . "*La Casita Contenta*," Charles' little house, which years ago he had built for himself in his aunt's orange-grove. . . .

What could be more suitable for Michael now? It would give him the independence he wanted; and at the same time he would be close to them,—an integral part of their régime. . . . "A hotel was no place for him," Miss Kelly declared. You could see how he shrank from the thought. . . . "Put him up for a day or two?" He wouldn't want to leave them,—once he knew of Charles' little house!

Miss Kelly, who had gone quite to pieces over Michael's letter, and had to take a heart-tablet and lie down on the couch, nearly went to pieces again next morning when Lisa came to her with a gravely shadowed face and a quiet voice and announced:— That she had changed her plans and had written to Miklovitch, telling him she was starting for New York at once.

"Starting for New York at once? What are you talking about, Lisa? . . . My dear,—are you ill? You look all drawn through a knothole. . . ."

"Not ill. . . . But rather—tired, perhaps. . . ."

"Tired? As if *you* were the only one to feel tired these days! I never heard of anything so selfish. . . ."

"Oh, Miss Kelly! You don't understand. . . ."

"I don't think I do. . . . There's nothing in the world to take you to New York till the first of the year. You've always seemed so sympathetic about Michael;—and you could help out enormously, if you stay. . . .

Listen. . . . Last night I got out all the pamphlets and stuff Michael used to send me when he was so interested in that Committee for Men Blinded in Battle, in the early days of the war;—before we ever thought *he*. . . . Well, it seems the thing is an art. It isn't simply a matter of reading the newspapers to them half an hour every morning after breakfast. I could do that myself. But they have to be taught to laugh again. . . . And to go out walking. . . . And to write on the typewriter and tie their own neckties. . . . And to want to meet people; and to make change. . . . And feel glad they are alive! What can Michael have learned of all that,—over there in a German prison-camp?

"As for me,—with my leaky valves. . . . How long would I last at that sort of work? But you with your youth, your magnetism, your gentleness. . . . Why,—you are the *very person*. . . . Michael is sure to take to you, and you to him. . . . And if God didn't send you here for that very purpose. . . ."

"Oh,—if I could believe it!" Lisa's hands were pressed against her heart.

"Believe it? It's only cowards who are afraid to believe. I'm not saying there won't be discouragements, —disappointments. But if it helps to put him in the right way. . . ."

"If I could feel that I had helped him. . . ."

Those tragic notes always held a thrill for Miss Kelly,—left her wondering whether, after all, "the legitimate" wasn't losing something very much worth while in Miss Reyes. . . .

"Where *is* your letter?"

"In the postbox."

"Go get it, then. . . ."

Mechanically Lisa went out to the little porch. Mechanically she took the letter to Miklovitch from the box and carried it back to her room.

There she sat down by the open window. Through the window one looked out to the brightness of roses glowing on either side a gravel path. . . . Up this path between the roses Michael would be coming soon. . . . Not the Michael she had used to know,—gifted, successful, full of the dreams and the fire of youth; but another Michael, broken, done-for, "gassed. . . ." Gassed must mean lungs as well as eyes. . . .

With that strange mesmeric susceptibility to projected vision,—the deepest and most intimate expression of her gypsy heritage,—as she sat there in the window suddenly Lisa *saw* this new Michael groping his blind way toward her. . . . The light fell on his white and stricken face. . . . He stumbled and stretched out his hands. . . .

Who could help him as she could help?

From the chair Lisa slipped down on her knees. . . . *She* had done nothing to seek out this meeting. In penitent and self-accusing tears she had resigned herself to the loss of Michael from her life. Now, in his affliction, —Who was leading him back to her? Who was it had guided their feet, through peril, through catastrophe, to this new joining of the way? . . .

For a long time Lisa knelt in the window,—very still. . . . The truest praying is nothing but listening, really. . . . When at last she rose from her knees it was as if a

light was shining from her. Not only her eyes were different. . . . Her color, her very carriage, expressed a sort of radiant, triumphant joy.

Let Michael come! Only cowards are afraid to believe. . . .

As Elisa de la Rosa, legitimatized by her grandfather's recognition, petted, "paragraphed,"—the new star of the dance,—for one month she would give him . . . all that she had to give!

Four years had passed since their tragic parting at San Miguel;—years as full of change for Michael as for her. Never had there been one breath of suspicion to connect the new Elisa she knew herself to have become with the other weak pitiful little Lisa, who, people said, had thrown herself into the sea. . . . The puzzle was, such should be the story,—when it had come so very near to being the truth! What others accepted without question was Michael in his blindness likely to doubt?

Yet if he did come to doubt it,—if through the shadows he was being led back to her by some strange gleaming of celestial love,—if he knew her, and could "forgive her" (never had Lisa been able to forget how Michael had turned away shuddering that afternoon on the sands after Fred Smalley came back to San Miguel and tried to "tell things. . . .") she would accept it as a sign that she was forgiven at last by Heaven itself!

Such was the ordeal by fire, the sacrifice almost mediæval in its mystical simplicity of faith, to which Lisa had resolved to submit her fate. . . . And because she wanted to play quite fair in this crucial cast of her

destiny, she drew from her finger the ring Michael had "wished" on it. . . . Though there was only one chance in a hundred he would ever notice whether she wore a ring or not. . . . She lifted it to her lips, kissed the raised outline of the cross that decorated the seal; then attached it to a slender golden chain and fastened it round her throat. . . .

If there is more rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over the ninety-and-nine righteous who have never needed to repent (though the proportion of sinless ones who know not such need seems rather excessive), one must suppose it is because the heart that has sinned and suffered and humbled itself is more nearly akin to Paradise than are the other ninety-and-nine. . . .

The day came round at last for Michael's arrival. His train would not get into Los Angeles till late in the evening. By noon Miss Kelly showed obvious signs of nervousness. Lisa did not seem nervous. All morning she had been busy putting the finishing touches to "*Casita Contenta*,—" Charles' little house. . . .

"My dear, you have made everything so bright and *happy looking!* Almost as if you expected him to know. . . ."

"He will know!"

The furniture was carefully adjusted. Everything that was necessary; nothing that was obtrusive. Once accustomed to the arrangement of things, Michael could put his hand on whatever he wanted. There was nothing to be tripped over; nothing to be collided into. A bowl

of mignonette and blue larkspur,—because they were sweet, but not too sweet,—was on the writing table. The little house consisted of a bedroom, a dressing-room, and a bath. . . . Charles had believed in making himself *quite* at home at his aunt's. Michael's man would occupy the dressing-room;—he had written he was bringing a man with him. On the little porch in front there was a chaise-longue and a hammock. . . . The air was perfumed with the scent of honeysuckle and Rêve d'Or roses and lemon-blossoms which bloom at any time of year. . . .

Old Charley Kelly, who happened to be in town, was coming over with the machine himself to get them in time to meet the train. He would not hear of sending the chauffeur,—though personally he disliked driving at night:—

"Nothin' but friends," he explained. "Nothin' but friends to greet him. . . . That's my idea!"

He bore all the earmarks of the self-made cattleman and bore them honorably. Like his sister, his fight had been a fight to the finish; like her, he had not with success lost a touch of his genuineness. . . . Like all the Kellys, from the first he "had fallen for Lisa." . . . She was so "darn pretty," he said. And he was always wondering how it was Charles hadn't proposed to her. . . . If *he'd* been thirty years younger. . . . !

Susan was almost as nervous as Miss Kelly. For three days she had been baking cake. It wasn't to be supposed there had been much *cake*,—where Mr. Michael was coming from! But she couldn't remember which flavoring he liked best. . . . It upset her very much,

that she couldn't. "*Such* a congenial young gentleman. . . ." Susan, of course, had known Michael in New York. . . . So she baked six different kinds;—and there they stood in a row on the pantry shelf. . . .

At the last moment Miss Kelly collapsed. She had to take a heart-tablet and lie down on the couch:—

"It's no go. . . . I'd never make the station. . . . You'll have to rep-rep-represent me, Lisa. . . . I'll be all right by the time you're back again. . . ."

"Here's a good detective story," Lisa adjusted the rug, the shade of the reading lamp. . . . "You don't want to *sound* as if you'd been crying, dear."

"Teach your grandmother to suck duck-eggs!" snapped Miss Kelly. "As if you *could know anything* about the way I feel! I loved . . . I loved Michael Martyn. . . . There, child,—run along. I'll be all right by the time you are back. . . ."

After all the emotional stress and strain of preparation the meeting, on the surface, was almost commonplace.

Michael came walking down the concrete exit from the tracks, a little after the first press of passengers had passed. And all anyone could have noticed was a slight young fellow, fragile looking, rather wan,—who held himself almost carefully erect and wore dark glasses and kept close to the man who carried the grips,—though he did not take his arm. . . . As he came nearer you saw the bit of ribbon in his coat. . . .

There could be no mistaking that it was Michael! Lisa stepped forward at once.

"I am Miss de la Rosa," she said. "Miss Kelly sent

me to meet you. It's rather a nice time to get in, I think; because one has the night to rest. . . . And it's pleasanter, too, driving through the city when there is no crush. . . ."

She saw Michael start,—turn his face toward her. . . . Evidently he had not yet grown accustomed to not expecting to *see* what he looked at. . . . Then, with all the old charm, to which for Lisa was added a poignancy, he put out his hand:—

"I am very glad to meet you, Miss de la Rosa. You must be Spanish, I think. . . ."

"My grandfather was Spanish," Lisa answered. She was determined to get it over with. "My stage name, which you may have heard, is Lisa Reyes. . . . And I do *gitana* dances. . . ."

"Lisa?. . ." Michael fell into step beside her; but made no other comment on the name. . . . "How did you come to take up *gitana* dancing. . . ? The Mexican gypsies have a special interest for me."

"Their dances are something quite distinct," Lisa answered. Her tone sounded stiff, even to herself.

Michael was quick to feel that perhaps he had offended. A fellow who didn't see was at such a tremendous disadvantage:—

"Yes, I should think that must be so," he agreed. And then that there might be no awkward pause:—"How wonderful the air is to-night! As soft as summer,—and perfumed. Are you wearing flowers?"

"I have one rose," she told him. "A Rêve d' Or. . . . They are my favorites. All around the porch of the little house you are to live in they make a perfect bower.

On the north side is honeysuckle, and on the south, the roses. . . ."

By this time they had reached the car, where Kelly senior was waiting:—

"Here he is!" cried Lisa. There was almost a gay little ring to her voice. And then to Michael:—"It's Mr. Charley Kelly,—Miss Kelly's brother. He wanted the honor of driving you home himself. . . ."

There was a moment of brief greeting. . . . The man got up in front with Mr. Kelly and Michael opened the door of the car and helped Lisa in;—or, rather, Lisa helped him to help her in. It was easy to see how Michael strained himself to meet the conventions; to appear to do things as other men would do them. He had written he was beginning to adjust himself. Evidently, the most painful period was over. . . . Lisa was glad of this;—because it made things easier for Michael.

With a little sigh she settled herself in the seat beside him. He had accepted her!

The sigh was echoed. . . . Suddenly she felt Michael trembling.

A motion which she could not control swept her body toward him. Their breath mingled. . . . For a moment his groping hands clung to hers. His nervous emaciated fingers gripped her wrists. . . . Lisa began to tremble, too.

Only for an instant that exquisite, instinctive contact lasted. . . . Then with the most delicate resolution in the world Lisa withdrew.

After all, it had perhaps been nothing but one of those unconquerable waves of terror. . . . The pathetic

longing of the newly blind for the reassurance, in unfamiliar surroundings, of touch, of contiguity. . . .

She detached the rose from her dress. She leaned again toward Michael and placed it in his fingers.

"I brought you one that was only half awake," she said.

He raised it to his face. And when he next spoke it was as to someone he was sure would understand;—someone with whom there was going to be no need for explanations.

"You ought to see some of the French gardens." Didn't they almost all, that year of their returning, like to tell us of all the pleasant things they could? "Those untouched by the war. Rosebushes that have bloomed since the days of Lafayette! And the fruit trees, too. . . . I wonder why people don't have pleached fruit trees in California?"

Perhaps to neither of them the rest of the ride seemed very real; nor the arrival at the peppertree bungalow where Miss Kelly kissed Michael foreign fashion on both cheeks, and *did* manage to sound as if she hadn't been crying too much;—while Susan hovered in the background with a large tray laden down with cake and hot foaming chocolate, because even if it *was* California it was winter time, and she was determined Mr. Michael should be nourished! Would he prefer fruit-cake, or pound-cake, or merely macaroons?

That was too hard a choice! He was going to try them all. *Such* a congenial young gentleman! . . . Susan had remembered exactly right.

Yet presently they saw what an effort it was;—what

a terrible effort! The effects of a German prison-camp were hardly to be lived down in a month or two. Nobody said anything about that, of course; but Miss Kelly told Michael he must be a "good boy" now, and go over to his own little house and get to sleep.

And Lisa in the softest of voices added:—He would smell the honeysuckle and the roses, all night long. . . .

Michael turned again in the doorway when he heard Lisa speak!

He had not thought he was going to be able to get to sleep. Yet strangely and almost instantly he did. . . . And in his dreams it seemed to him that the room was full of music. . . .

He could hardly believe it at first. It was so long since there had been any music! The delicate whispering notes filled his heart, flooded his brain. Without growing louder, they grew clearer, more sustained. . . . Ineffably sweet, poignantly stirring, they seemed to Michael like a memory,—that was more than half a promise. . . .

The tears started under his closed lids. He forgot that he was blind. He forgot that he would never play again. He forgot that everything had been blotted out of his life that could possibly make it worth the living. . . .

Suddenly, he sat up in bed and stretched out his arms;—

"Lisa!" he cried. "*Lisa!*"

It is hardly to be imagined any mother would deliberately set out to torment a sorely stricken and afflicted

son. During the three years Michael had been lost to her (expatriated, submerged, under the bitter bureaucratic rule of one of the worst run German prison-camps), Judith Martyn's hair had lost its sheen of raven blackness. The high timbre of her voice had acquired at times almost a shrewish ring. "The war had made an old woman of her. . . ." That was one of the things Michael was never permitted to forget:—"Other prisoners had managed to communicate with their families. . . ."

"It was because he had enlisted as a Canadian," Michael attempted to explain:— "There seemed to be an especial animus, an especial distinction made, against the British prisoners,—always. Germans measure by rule of thumb. He—hadn't seemed able to get the matter straightened out. . . ."

He did not add the excuse of his blindness. Those first agonizing months of neglect, of dumb, incredulous, bewildering enduring, remained forever to Michael a time it was impossible to talk about. Besides, it would not have made any difference. Nothing had ever made any difference to Judith. Her moods were as savagely relentless as the scourges of the furies. All her life she had flagellated with them those she loved. . . .

Michael was his father over again,—she could not repeat it too often. . . . Ready to give up,—without an inch of fight. . . . How could he expect to get better when he would not exert himself? Did he want to go walking? Did he want her to read to him? It was ridiculous of him to refuse to touch his violin because he could not play now as he had used to play. . . .

By some strange ruling of Providence, Michael had not died during those three hell-black years in Germany. But he *was* dying in New York;—and that was how the doctors came to order him to California.

Again Judith was furious. She had always hated the West. Why couldn't Michael learn to accommodate himself? Just like his father! . . . Well,—if he *would* go, he must take a man with him. She had leased her apartment for the season. There were a hundred other complications. . . .

It was under Miss Kelly's peppertree Michael was at last finding the rest he had started out to die to find; —since it hadn't seemed possible he could get it any other way:—

"Where you are I can *think* music," he said to Lisa. And then between them fell one of those strange stabbing silences. . . .

Did Michael *know?* The beating of Lisa's pulses sounded in her ears like drums. . . . Oh, if he knew,— why did he not speak? Why did he not give some other sign than those terrible, pitiless thrusts of memory,— that were almost as cruel as they were beautiful and sweet. . . .

It was not like Michael to be cruel!

One day when they were alone together under the peppertree he had leaned over to Lisa and taken her hand in his. He had run his fingers down her slim fingers. . . . Both their hands were cold as stone. "You don't wear any rings," was what Michael said. . . .

Rose Kelly could not congratulate herself enough on

the "hunch" she had had that Michael and Lisa were going to prove "cut out for each other. . . ."

"Why,—it's as plain as the nose on your face!" This to old Charley, whose nose was quite obviously Hibernian:— "Michael Martyn came out to California to die. . . . *Dear boy,*—he wanted to be as polite as he could about it! But mark my words! They aren't either of them thinking of anything like that these days! Watch his face when he hears her voice; watch *hers* when she sees him coming through the orange grove. . . ."

"But she's tied up, ain't she? Hand and foot with that Russian chap?"

"Her *dancing* contract,—yes. She'll have to dance, of course. . . . More's the pity, if she didn't. But I never heard of a case yet where *that* sort of engagement cut out the other sort. . . . No, Charley. This isn't going to be an occasion for tomb-stones!"

Michael did not want to be cruel. He had suffered too much himself from the cruelty of others ever willingly to step on a spider again,—if it could be avoided. But when a fellow didn't see, he couldn't be quite sure where he was going to step. And that was why he had to be cruel to Lisa. Handicapped as he was, he could think of no other way of wringing her secret from her. If he could only *hurt* her enough, she would, perhaps, cry out!

People who do not see are not easily deceived. They may be puzzled, put at a piteous disadvantage. If Michael had not *known* that his Lisa had thrown herself into the sea, he would have recognized her at once in

this new Elisa de la Rosa,—the beautiful star of the dance. . . . He *had* recognized her voice. Was it possible there could be any other voice with the same caressing cadences,—half gay, half appealing? To his sensitive musician's ear it was unmistakable. He had recognized her hand,—with its slim, smooth fingers. To his sensitive musician's touch, that, too was beyond question. . . .

Yet—was he suddenly to disbelieve the thing he had been believing for four years? The week following Lisa's tragic vanishing, Sylvestre, the gypsy, had appeared in San Miguel. . . . Gringos could make the devil of a fuss. . . . Sylvestre was determined there should be no hue-and-cry after Lisa. Wherefore he sought out Michael, and with the tears streaming down his face told of the discovery of his half-sister's drowned body by the gypsy fishing-fleet. The long hair was floating about it like floating kelp. . . . The gypsies had tried to lift it into their boats. But there was a high tide running. The body had been swept out to sea. . . . Michael had never doubted the truth of Sylvestre's story. And there had been later contributory evidence which appeared to confirm it. . . .

It had been this contributory evidence that had sent him hurrying to Canada to enlist. . . . It had been this contributory evidence that had first killed his music. . . . And, now, when he had quite made up his mind there never would be any music any more,—it had come back!

Perhaps that was the greatest miracle of all! At night when he was asleep the sweet singing voices bathed

his senses,—soothed him and healed him . . . washed away his sorrows, filled him with a new joy, a new hope. In the daytime the sunshine turned to music,—warm and golden. . . . The perfume of the roses, the songs of the mockingbirds chimed and rang together. . . .

"If only," he said one morning to Lisa, "the *mechanical* side of it wasn't barred to me. . . ."

"Why, it isn't," she answered, and let a rose fall into her basket. They were alone in the garden. She was gathering flowers for Susan along the sunny gravel-path. . . . "Don't you remember the men at the *Phare?* What they could learn to do, you can learn to do, Michael. . . . Oh,—*Michael!*"

That cry,—that name, when neither of them were expecting it!

"*Lisa!*"

He took a bewildered step, groping his blind way toward her. The light fell on his white and stricken face. . . . He stumbled and stretched out his arms. . . .

She dropped her scissors. She dropped her flowers.

"Lisa!" He had imprisoned her hands. "Where is my ring?"

"Warm in my breast, Michael. . . . I—I—was afraid."

"Afraid,—*dearest!*"

Long ago in the German prison-camp Michael had come to forgive Lisa. For if to understand all is to pardon all, to suffer is to understand.

"Oh, but Michael. . . . It was true! It was true,—what they said!"

Michael hardly heard her. He was thinking that he had

nothing,—she all:—"Lisa! Lisa,—what have I to give you now?"

"The Flower of the World, Michael. . . . The flower I played with,—and threw away. . . ."

FINIS

University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
305 De Neve Drive - Parking Lot 17 • Box 951388
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90095-1388
Return this material to the library from which it was borrowed.

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A 000 923 208 3

PS
3515
H1266f

Un